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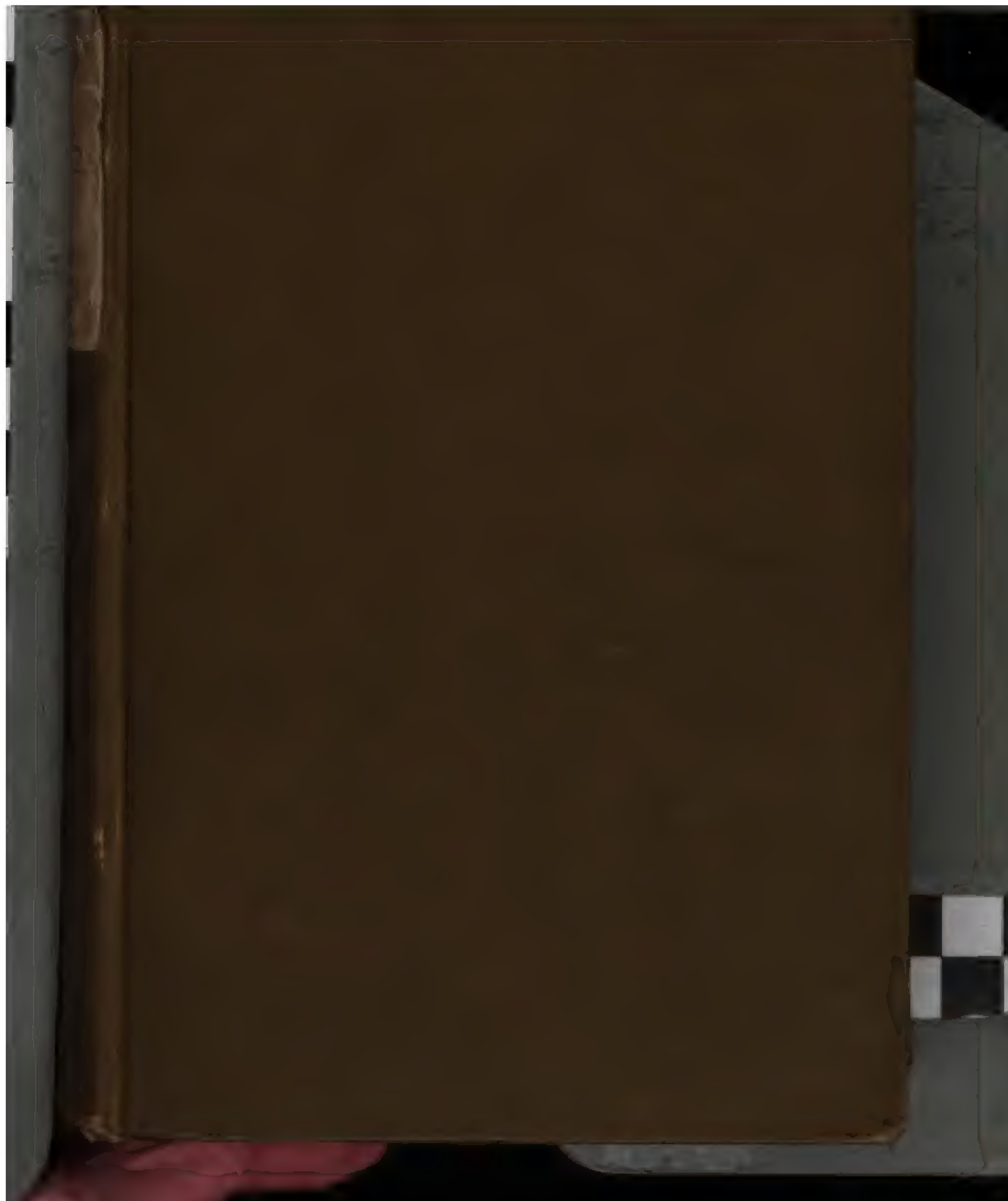
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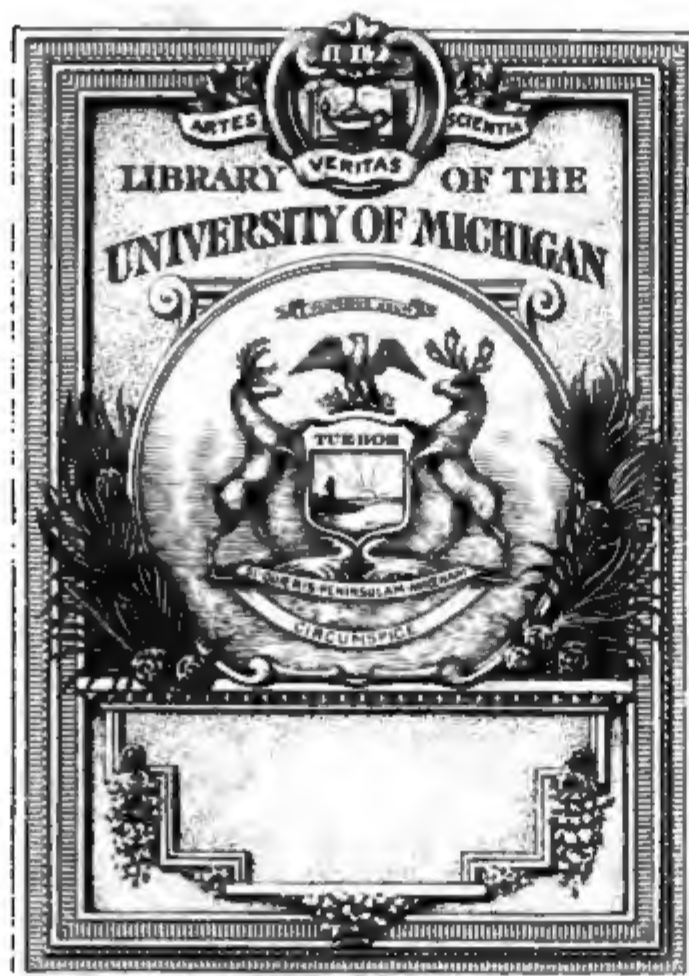
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*I am sincerely yours,*

*Wm. C. Abbott.*



# HOW TO GET ON IN THE WORLD



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# HOW TO GET ON IN THE WORLD

AS DEMONSTRATED BY THE

LIFE AND LANGUAGE

OF

WILLIAM COBBETT

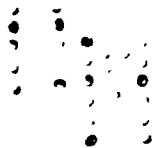
TO WHICH IS ADDED

COBBETT'S ENGLISH GRAMMAR WITH NOTES

BY

ROBERT WATERS

Teacher of Language and Literature in the Hoboken (N. J.) Academy



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JAMES W. PRATT, 75 FULTON STREET.

1883

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## PREFACE.

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WHY AND FOR WHOM THIS BOOK WAS WRITTEN.

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At a time when the conviction is fast gaining ground that the language studies pursued in our public and private schools utterly fail to attain the object aimed at, and that the one thing needful, to obtain a good practical knowledge of the English tongue, is the careful study of the best, most idiomatic English writers, it is thought that an account of the life and writings of one of England's most powerful writers and most remarkable characters, with one of the best productions of his pen, cannot fail to be useful. There is, perhaps, no modern English writer whose style is so pleasing and attractive, so vigorous and racy; so calculated to arouse interest and create a desire to learn and get on in the world, as that of WILLIAM COBBETT. As a writer, as a master of pure, correct, vigorous, idiomatic Saxon English, he has never been surpassed; and as an instructor of the language which he himself used so thoroughly well, he is unquestionably superior to any other writer who ever attempted to teach it. Let any intelligent American read his little English Grammar, and he will be compelled to admit that it is superior to anything of the kind ever produced; or let him read his Advice to Young Men, and he will as surely allow that in attractiveness of style, in clearness and force of expression, correctness and simplicity of language, no other work of the kind can at all compare with it.

Mr. Richard Grant White, in speaking of the language of British authors, rightly places Cobbett among authors of the very highest class: "Macaulay, Thackeray, Helps, George Eliot, Johnson, Burke, Hume, Gibbon, Goldsmith, and Cobbett." Nor is he at all unworthy of such noble company; for I hardly know which of them surpasses him in effective use of our noble Anglo-Saxon speech. The *Saturday Review* speaks of him as possessing "immense vigor, resource, energy, and courage, joined to a force of understanding, a degree of logical power, and, above all, a force of expression, which have rarely been equalled." Southey declared that there never was a better or more forcible English writer than William Cobbett; and it was, I think, the same writer who declared that if a foreigner should ask him for a specimen of PURE ENGLISH, he would select a passage, not from a work of one of the Oxford or Cambridge-bred scholars, but from one of those of the peasant-born and self-taught WILLIAM COBBETT.

As to his Grammar, it has enabled thousands who have failed to make head or tail of any other grammar to master the English language, and to speak and write it correctly. Sir Henry Lytton Bulwer speaks of it as "the only amusing grammar in the world;" Hazlitt says it is "interesting as a story-book;" and Mr. Richard Grant White declares that he "knows it well, and has read it with great admiration." When it first appeared in England, ten thousand copies were sold in the first month, and it has had a steady sale in that country ever since. In Germany it has been considered worthy of an honor which has never, I believe, been conferred on any other English *grammar*; namely, it is printed in the original, with notes in the German language, for the use of German students.

The language of the ordinary English grammar-book is incomprehensible to boys and girls; its words are unfa-

miliar and unintelligible to them; in fact, the whole vocabulary of grammar is a DEAD LANGUAGE to them. Now Cobbett's little work has the BREATH OF LIFE in it; it is in LIVING, EVERY-DAY ENGLISH; the very words of it are alive, running over with life; it talks to its readers, allures and draws them on, and makes learning pleasant to them. Read Cobbett to a class of boys and girls, and you will see their eyes sparkle, their lips break in smiles, and their whole faces indicate pleased interest and surprise. Turn, now, and read Brown, Green, or Whitney to them. What a change! Their faces instantly assume an expression of listlessness and indifference; their jaws fall and their eyes grow dull; weariness takes possession of them, and if there is any movement at all among them, it is one expressive of impatience or annoyance. And no wonder; for such a change is passing from LIFE to DEATH. The grammars of these men are nothing but words, words, words; names, names, names; rules, rules, rules; Latin before and Latin behind; prefixes, suffixes, adjuncts; subordinate and co-ordinate elements; causative, copulative, adversative, alternative connectives; genitive, accusative, ablative, locative cases; appositive adjectives and adnominal genitives; factitive predicates and dative objectives;—a perfect whirlwind of hard words and phrases. And then they are all cut up into little bits; so many dry, hard, knotty little chips; sapless and savorless, broad-faced, narrow-faced; long, short; thick, thin; all tacked on one to another. How different Cobbett's little work is to theirs! He carries everything along in one lucid living whole, and there is a freshness, an Englishness, a salt-sea-air-iness about his work that is entirely lacking in theirs. Even Mr. Whitney devotes page after page to nothing but giving names to forms and expressions which never can possibly be misused; and the scholar who, with incredible pains and toil, gropes his way through his book, finds at last that he has learned

little more than a lot of names. Cobbett gives just that knowledge which is necessary to enable one to WRITE and SPEAK correctly, and all the rest he leaves to philologists and word-mongers. Instead of walking away up in the air on stilts, with unapproachable strides, he comes down and talks to his scholar in language that he can understand, in language that every plough-boy or news-boy can understand; and yet, though suited to the comprehension of the least cultivated, his work is written in a style that the man of the finest culture cannot but admire.

If, therefore, any text-book at all is to be introduced in the class, Cobbett's Grammar is the very one; the only one; for with it, the dullest, most lifeless teacher *must* succeed in teaching, and the dullest, most lifeless scholar *must* succeed in learning the principles of English grammar; or with even no teacher at all he will succeed, for it is itself the teacher; teaching, truly enough, "without a master," or, at least, without any other master. I know this by actual experience; for it was the first grammar that had any significance to me; the first that I could understand; the first from which I learned anything;—all the others were hateful things, which had no sort of significance to me. Cobbett's work is a mental awakener; a rouser of curiosity, interest, and ambition; and when these feelings are once aroused, everything is gained, teaching becomes easy, and success is certain. For what makes school a place of torture to children is the being compelled to listen to what they do not understand, to what they do not see the use of or the good of, and what they therefore do not care to listen to.

This little grammar is the very book, too, for those who are trying to *teach themselves*; those who are working away at mental improvement by self-help; for those who have none but Providence and themselves to help them; the very work for "soldiers, sailors, apprentices, plough-boys, clerks," mechanics; for all those who are striving

to learn for themselves how to speak and write good, plain, correct English. It is the very book for those ambitious and earnest young teachers who wish to learn the best way of communicating knowledge to youthful minds. When Charles James Fox heard any one speak in high terms of any recently-delivered speech, he was wont to ask, "Does it read well?" and if the answer were in the affirmative, he would say, "It is a bad speech;" concluding that it was too formal and elaborate to be talk-like and natural. If any one should tell me of a good lesson which he had listened to, the first thing I should ask would be: Did it excite interest? was the attention of the scholars aroused? did they like it? If the answer to these questions were in the negative, then I should say the lesson was a bad one, no matter how logical, well arranged, compact, or learned it might otherwise be: for the first requisite in teaching is to arouse interest; whence follows attention; whence the acquisition of knowledge; whence reflection; whence culture. Hence the great advantage of Cobbett's manner of teaching: he arouses attention; awakens interest; makes the subject attractive; and kindles a desire to learn. He was the first to write on the subject in a way that plain people could understand; and I think he still continues unrivalled as a teacher of the art of writing well.

The aim of this work is to show what COBBETT was as a MAN and a WRITER. It is a study in language as well as in life. It is intended especially for every young man who is striving to educate himself and to GET ON IN THE WORLD; for every young teacher aiming at advancement in his profession, and for every one who is preparing himself to be a teacher or writer; for all those who wish to see how a good writer has acquired his power of expression, and how he teaches others to acquire this power. Here is the story of a poor plough-boy working his way up in the world by his own unaided exertions, from the lowest



round of the ladder to almost the highest; from a poor lawyer's drudge and copyist to be one of the first writers of the age; and here is one of the best works of his genius, composed when he had attained the full maturity of his powers.

The most frequently-quoted biography of Cobbett is that by the Rev. John Selby Watson.\* This work, to which I here acknowledge my indebtedness for many facts in the life of Cobbett, is well written, complete, and apparently impartial; but the impartiality is only apparent—and there is no surer way of destroying a man's character than by apparent impartiality in the doing of it—for its *spirit* is strongly hostile to Cobbett. Never was there a more skillfully arranged plan of attack; never was there such well-disguised hostility under the cloak of impartiality; never did cunning savage or murderous assassin ply his weapon with more deadly effect than Mr. Watson has plied his pen in destroying the character of William Cobbett. The way is prepared by the account of the life of a notoriously bad man. COBBETT is linked with WILKES; and his character is painted in such dark and doubtful colors, that we finally feel as little respect for the one as for the other. Mr. Watson belongs to the Established Church, to Oxford, and to the Conservative Party, at all of which Cobbett flung the most vigorous and telling shafts. Mr. Watson's sympathies are almost always with those whom Cobbett opposed or attacked; and he subjects his acts and motives to such a suspicious scrutiny, looks with such constant distrust on almost every thing Cobbett tells or says of himself, and puts his actions in such a repellent, discreditable light, that the impression one finally gets of him is, that he was a man with whom one wishes to have nothing further to

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\* Biographies of John Wilkes and William Cobbett. Blackwood. Edinburgh, 1870.

do, whose conduct was hardly ever praiseworthy, and from whose writings very little profit is to be derived. Being deeply convinced of the injustice of the picture thus drawn by Mr. Watson, I have endeavored to disprove a number of his accusations and insinuations, and to give an unprejudiced and fair view of the man and his writings.

Mr. Edward Smith's *Biography of Cobbett*\*—which I had not discovered until I had finished mine—is a very good one and very full. Mr. Smith's work is an endeavor to show what Cobbett was as a MAN, while mine is an attempt to show what he was as a WRITER as well as a MAN. Though the best account of him that I have seen, Mr. Smith's work is, I think, faulty in one respect: it is the opposite of Mr. Watson's, being about as uniformly laudatory of his subject as Watson's is condemnatory. Mr. Smith strives as hard to make Cobbett out a perfect man, as Mr. Watson (whom he never once mentions through his whole two volumes) strives to make him out a worthless one. While Mr. Watson takes pains to bring out prominently all the doubtful passages of his life, and says little of the noble ones, Mr. Smith passes over very lightly, or mentions not at all, the doubtful passages, and makes the most of the noble ones. Besides, many things which this writer regards from an English point of view present a very different appearance when regarded from an American point of view. The only important things that I have taken from his work are an extract from Mr. Windham's diary, confirming Cobbett's presence at the Pitt dinner; and a list of Cobbett's works, which I have placed at the end of the life.

I am also indebted to the "Historical Characters" of Sir Henry Lytton Bulwer (now Lord Dalling) for one or two important facts. But the main sources of my informa-

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\* William Cobbett: a Biography: 2 volumes. London: Sampson, Low & Co., 1878.

tion are in the writings of Cobbett himself; writings which, it is well known, are remarkably autobiographical in their nature.

COBBETT, whom the *London Times* well termed "the last of the Saxons," and the *Saturday Review* "the most English of Englishmen," was a truly great man, notwithstanding his many faults, and notwithstanding all that his enemies have said of him. For me, he has peculiar claims; for he was one of the heroes of my boyhood—a man from whose writings I received more instruction in my youth than from those of any other; and it has been inexpressibly painful to me to see him covered with obloquy, accused of bribe-taking, forgery, falsehood, dishonesty, demagoguery, hypocrisy and what not; nearly all of which accusations without any other foundation than mere assumption. Cobbett was not a perfect man—who is?—but he had many sterling virtues well worthy of imitation; and the knowledge of both his virtues and his failings may be found, especially by young people, profitable for instruction, for precept, and for example.

HOBOKEN ACADEMY,

HOBOKEN, N. J., May 9th, 1883.

# Contents of the Life and Language.

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# LIFE AND LANGUAGE OF WILLIAM COBBETT.

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## PART I.

COBBETT'S CAREER IN YOUTH AND EARLY MANHOOD.—FROM  
HIS BIRTH, 1762, TILL HIS RETURN TO ENGLAND, 1800.

### CHAPTER I.

THE OCCUPATIONS OF AN ENGLISH FARMER'S BOY.

IN the history of the Anglo-Saxon race, the striking fact is observable, that the men who have caused great changes in society, who have overthrown governments and creeds and created a new order of things, have nearly all sprung from the common people, from the honest toiling class who produce the wealth and fight the battles of a country. This may be true of some other races as well as of the Anglo-Saxon; but it is conspicuous in this race. Among other races the princely and the noble class play the chief role, and the people are the ciphers with which they work out their problems. Buckle, the historian, maintains, indeed, that no reformer is ever successful who is not sprung from, or put forward by, the people; for he never can be successful, unless the people are, like him, desirous of reforms, ripe for reforms; and where this is the case, the reformer becomes simply the representative,



the mouthpiece of the people, for whom he pleads and plans, the exponent of their thought, their wishes, their aspirations.

Leading men never, in fact, bring the people along with and up to them, but they, the leaders, are pushed on or carried forward by the undercurrent of feeling in the hearts of the people, and they simply realize what the people have long desired and striven for.

In literature, as in politics, it is the same story: the great names are those of men of undistinguished ancestry, who have worked their way up to fame and influence in spite of every obstacle. And the man whose career I am about to narrate to you, although he is, perhaps, less widely known than Swift or Burns, Lincoln or Garfield, is scarcely less remarkable as a child of the people; a man who, rising from the ranks, became pre-eminently a representative man, a reformer, an instructor of the people, a master of the pen; who introduced a new style of writing, a new manner of teaching, new ideas in political economy, and promoted a new and better mode of parliamentary representation; a man who, notwithstanding grave errors and great faults, did more to educate the people politically, socially, and literarily, than perhaps any other man of his time. In short, WILLIAM COBBETT was one of those powerful men who, with a sound mind in a sound body, with strong common sense and a determined will, with keen perceptive and analytic faculties, had the gift of expressing his thoughts forcibly and effectively, and the courage to stand by them, against every kind of opposition, when he did express them.

In giving an account of the life of Mr. Cobbett, I shall let him tell his own story wherever I can; and this for two reasons: first, because he is always particularly entertaining when speaking of himself; and, secondly, because I wish to display the WRITER even more than the MAN.

Indeed, in this case, the writer *is* the man; for never

did any man's individuality stand out more prominently in his writings than that of Cobbett in his. His heart throbs in every page he wrote; and every thing he did was done with his whole heart. He is famous for his amusing, nay fascinating egotism; for his constant habit of giving scenes and experiences from his own life to illustrate or exemplify some truth he is inculcating; in fact, there is hardly an important event in his life of which there is not an echo to be found somewhere in his numerous writings.

William Cobbett was born in 1762 in Farnham, England, where his father cultivated a small farm. His youth, though without schooling and passed in constant toil, seems to have been a happy one; for he loved the rural scenes amongst which his youthful days were passed, and always recalled them with pleasure. He tells us himself that, in all his wanderings, he was hardly ever without a garden of some sort, as he could not live without the sight of grass, and flowers, and trees.

"With respect to my ancestors," he says in his autobiography, which extends only to 1799, "I shall go no farther back than my grandfather, and for this plain reason, that I never heard talk of any prior to him. He was a day-laborer, and I have heard my father say, that he worked for one farmer from the day of his marriage to the day of his death, upwards of forty years. He died before I was born, but I have often slept beneath the same roof that sheltered him, and where his widow dwelt for several years after his death; it was a little thatched cottage, with a garden before the door. It had but two windows; a damson-tree shaded one, and a clump of filberts the other.

"Here I and my brothers went every Christmas and Whitsuntide, to spend a week or two, and torment the poor old woman with our noise and dilapidations. She used to give us milk and bread for breakfast, an apple-

pudding for dinner, and a piece of bread and cheese for supper. Her fire was made of turf, cut from the neighboring heath, and her evening light was a rush dipped in grease.

“My father was, when I was born, a farmer. The reader will easily believe, from the poverty of his parents, that he had received no very brilliant education; he was, however, learned for a man in his rank of life. When a little boy, he drove the plough for twopence a day; and these his earnings were appropriated to the expenses of an evening-school. What a village schoolmaster could be expected to teach, he had learnt, and had, besides, considerably improved himself in several branches of the mathematics. He understood land-surveying well, and was often chosen to draw the plans of disputed territory; in short, he had the reputation of possessing experience and understanding, which never fails, in England, to give a man in a country place some little weight with his neighbors. He was honest, industrious, and frugal; it was not, therefore, wonderful that he should be situated on a good farm, and happy in a wife of his own rank, like him, beloved and respected.

“So much for my ancestors, from whom, if I derive no honor, I derive no shame. A father like ours, it will be readily supposed, did not suffer us to eat the bread of idleness. I do not remember the time when I did not earn my living. My first occupation was driving the small birds from the turnip-field and the rooks from the peas. When I first trudged a-field, with my wooden bottle and my satchel slung over my shoulder, I was hardly able to climb the gates and stiles; and at the close of the day to reach home was a task of infinite difficulty. My next employment was weeding wheat, and leading a single horse at harrowing barley; hoeing peas followed, and hence I arrived at the honor of joining the reapers in harvest, driving the team, and holding the plough. We were all of

us strong and laborious, and my father used to boast that he had four boys, the eldest of whom was but fifteen years old, who did as much work as any three men in the parish of Farnham."

And in his "Advice to Young Men," he says: "When I was a very little boy, I remember in the barley-sowing season, I was going along by the side of a field, near Waverly Abbey; the primroses and bluebells bespangled the banks on both sides of me; a thousand linnets were singing in a spreading oak over my head; while the jingling of the traces and the whistling of the plough-boys saluted my ear from over the hedge; and, as it were to snatch me from the enchantment, the hounds, at that instant, having started a hare in the hanger\* on the other side of the field, came up scampering over it in full cry, taking me after them many a mile. I was not more than eight years old, but this particular scene has presented itself to my mind many times every year from that day to this. I always enjoy it over again, and I have resolved to give, if possible, the same enjoyment to my children."

"At eleven years of age," he tells us in another work, "my employment was clipping of box-edgings and weeding beds of flowers in the garden of the Bishop of Winchester at the castle of Farnham. I had always been fond of beautiful gardens; and a gardener, who had just come from the king's garden at Kew, gave me such a description of them as made me instantly resolve to work in those gardens. The next morning, without saying a word to any one, off I set, with no clothes except those upon my back, and with thirteen half-pence in my pocket. I found that I must go to Richmond, and I accordingly went on from place to place, inquiring my way thither. A long day—it was in June—brought me to Richmond in the afternoon. Two pennyworth of bread and cheese,

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\*German *Gehänge*, slope, declivity.

and a pennyworth of small beer, which I had on the road, and one half-penny that I had lost somehow or other, left threepence in my pocket. With this for my whole fortune, I was trudging through Richmond in my blue smock-frock, and my red garters tied under my knees, when, staring about me, my eye fell upon a little book in a bookseller's window, on the outside of which was written, 'THE TALE OF A TUB, price 3d.' The title was so odd that my curiosity was excited. I had the threepence, but then I could not have any supper. In I went, and got the little book, which I was so impatient to read that I got over into a field at the upper corner of Kew Gardens, where there stood a haystack. On the shady side of this I sat down to read. The book was so different from anything I had ever read before—it was something so new to my mind—that, though I could not understand some parts of it, it delighted me beyond description, and it produced what I have always considered a sort of birth of intellect. I read on until it was dark, without any thought of supper or bed. When I could see no longer, I put my little book in my pocket, and tumbled down by the side of the stack, where I slept till the birds in Kew Gardens awakened me in the morning, when off I started to Kew, reading my little book. The singularity of my dress, the simplicity of my manner, my lively and confident air, and doubtless his own compassion besides, induced the gardener—who was a Scotchman, I remember—to give me victuals, find me lodging, and set me to work; and it was during the period that I was at Kew, that George IV. and two of his brothers laughed at the oddness of my dress, while I was sweeping the grass-plot round the foot of the pagoda. The gardener, seeing me fond of books, lent me some gardening books to read; but these I could not relish after my 'Tale of a Tub,' which I carried about with me wherever I went; and when I, at about twenty-four years old, lost it in a box that fell overboard in the

Bay of Fundy, in North America, the loss gave me greater pain than I have ever felt at losing thousands of pounds."

The prince who laughed at that little fellow in his odd dress little imagined that he would one day become the literary champion of his father's government in his lost dominions of America, and subsequently the most formidable assailant of his father's and of his own government or misgovernment at home—one whom his ministers would pursue with such relentless severity as to cause him to be condemned, for one single attack, to an imprisonment of two years and a fine of a thousand pounds. Equally little did the prince imagine that this little fellow in the rustic suit would one day play an important rôle in a domestic drama in which he (the prince) was deeply concerned, and afterwards write a famous history of his scandalous regency and reign.



## CHAPTER II.

### FROM HOLDING THE PLOUGH TO DRIVING A QUILL.

THE following passage will show that in independence of thought, the father was not inferior to the son: "My father used to take one of us every year to the great hop-fair at Wey-Hill. The fair was held at Old Michaelmas-tide, and the journey was, to us, a sort of reward for the labors of the summer. It happened to be my turn to go thither the very year that Long Island was taken by the British. A great company of hop merchants and farmers were just sitting down to supper as the post arrived, bringing in the 'Extraordinary Gazette,' which announced the victory. A hop factor from London took the paper, placed his chair upon the table, and began to read in an audible voice. He was opposed; a dispute ensued; and my father retired, taking me by the hand, to another

apartment, where we supped with about a dozen others of the same sentiments. Here Washington's health, and success to the Americans, were repeatedly toasted; and this was the first time, as far as I can recollect, that I ever heard the General's name mentioned. Little did I then dream that I should ever see the man, and still less that I should hear some of his countrymen reviling and execrating him.

"My father was a partisan of the Americans: he used frequently to dispute on the subject with the gardener of a nobleman who lived near us. This was generally done with good humor, over a pot of our best ale; yet the disputants sometimes grew warm, and the subject gave rise to language that could not fail to attract our attention. My father was worsted, without doubt, as he had for antagonist a shrewd and sensible old Scotchman, far his superior in political knowledge; but he pleaded before a partial audience: we thought there was but one wise man in the world, and that one was our father. He who pleaded the cause of the Americans had an advantage, too, with young minds: he had only to represent the king's troops as sent to cut the throats of a people who were our friends and kinsfolk, merely because they would not submit to oppression, and his cause was gained."

In the winter evenings, this good father instructed his boys in reading, writing and arithmetic. Grammar, Cobbett tells us, his father did not understand himself; but we shall see presently how young Cobbett supplied this deficiency. He followed the plough until his sixteenth year, when, being sent to visit a kinsman near Portsmouth, he got a view of the sea and of the fleet, and a strong desire to become a sailor took possession of him. He managed to get on board of one of the men-of-war, and presented himself before the captain as a candidate for naval service. Fortunately the captain was a humane man, and

he plainly represented to the young enthusiast the hardships of a naval life, and endeavored to dissuade him from his design. He was sent on shore; but, not satisfied with the representations of the captain, he applied to the post admiral, who also refused his request. Then he returned to his home and to his duties on the farm; but, like Robert Burns after a sight of fashionable life in Edinburgh, he had seen something more pleasing than rustic life; and he was spoiled for a farmer. He had heard something of the victories of England's naval heroes, and the victories of husbandry seemed tame in comparison.

This incident, like his journey to Kew, displays, at an early age, that venturesome and self-confident spirit for which he was afterwards remarkable; and the opinion has been expressed that, had he entered the navy, he would probably have attained as much distinction in naval life as he subsequently attained in civil life, and that his career would have added another star to the already brilliant constellation of England's naval heroes.

In the following spring (1783), while on his way to a fair, he saw the London stage-coach rattling down a hill, coming toward him at a merry rate; and before it had come up to him he had made up his mind to take passage by this coach for London. So up he got and away he sped for the great city. Luckily, on the coach he made the acquaintance of a merchant, who had had dealings with his father, and who from regard for the father took some interest in the son. This gentleman, after trying in vain to induce him to return home, endeavored to find him some employment in London, and soon succeeded in placing him with a lawyer in Lincoln's Inn. With this lawyer, Mr. Holland of Gray's Inn, young Cobbett passed nearly a year of the very hardest kind of life. In his office he learned, however, some things not to be learned on a farm, besides much more orthographical knowledge



than most boys learn in a year's schooling. After repeated endeavors and many blunders and failures, he succeeded in becoming a very fair copyist; and now he was obliged to drive a quill, in a dingy room on the top floor, from five in the morning till eight at night, and sometimes all night long. In a letter to one of his brothers, written at this period, he says: "I am in an earthly hell. If you feel that you have any roguery in you, and have a disposition to exercise it to its full extent, put yourself at the top of a coach, as I did, and make the best of your way to London. I could point out to you many places where you can practice to perfection; but stop nowhere: get into an attorney's office as soon as you can, and you will have plenty of scope for your abilities. You may now and then have something to do with wit; but it is only writing, Surrey 'to wit,' or Middlesex 'to wit.' If you think that you have any tenderness of conscience about you, for God's sake leave it behind you: it is of no use at all in an attorney's office; and try as much as you can to obliterate from your mind all the fusty antiquated notions about the responsibility of an oath: it is a most easy and convenient method of getting over a difficulty or a mistake: but perjury is not the only dirty place which attorneys wade through to obtain their unhallowed gains." And subsequently, in his autobiography, he says: "No part of my life has been totally unattended with pleasure except the eight or nine months I passed at Gray's Inn. The office—for so the dungeon was called—where I wrote, was so dark on cloudy days, we were obliged to burn candles. I worked like a galley-slave from five in the morning till eight or nine at night, and sometimes all night long. How many quarrels have I assisted to foment and perpetuate between those poor innocent fellows, John Doe and Richard Roe! How many times (God forgive me!) have I set them to assault each other with guns, swords, staves, and pitchforks, and then brought them to

answer for their misdeeds before our Sovereign Lord the King seated in his Court of Westminster? When I think of the *said*s and *soforth*s, and the counts of tautology that I scribbled over; when I think of those sheets of seventy-two words, and those lines two inches apart, my brain turns! Gracious Heaven! if I am doomed to be wretched, bury me beneath Iceland snows, and let me feed on blubber; stretch me under the burning line, and deny me thy propitious dew; nay, if it be thy will, suffocate me with the infected and pestilential air of a democratic club-room,—but save me, save me from the desk of an attorney! Mr. Holland was but little in the chambers himself. He always went out to dinner, while I was left to be provided for by the *laundress*, as he called her. Those gentlemen of the law, who have resided in the inns of Court in London, know very well what a laundress means. Ours was, I believe, the oldest and ugliest of the official sisterhood. She had age and experience enough to be lady abbess of all the nuns in the convent of Irish-Town. It would be wronging the witch of Endor to compare her to this hag, who was the only creature that deigned to enter into conversation with me. All except the name, I was in prison, and the weird sister was my keeper. Our chambers were to me what the subterranean cavern was to Gil Blas; the description of the Dame Leonarda exactly suited my laundress; nor were the professions, or rather the practice, of our masters altogether dissimilar.”

One Sunday morning, while taking his weekly walk in one of the parks, to feast his eyes, as he says, with the sight of trees and grass and flowers, he saw on one of the gates a placard inviting all loyal young men who wished to gain honor and fame in his majesty's service to repair to a certain rendezvous and enlist in the marines. Tired of his quill-driving life and longing for a change, Cobbett determined to accept the royal invitation. On

presenting himself, and accepting the shilling to drink his majesty's health, he found he was enlisted in a marching regiment of foot instead of the marines. On stating his disappointment to the Captain, who was an Irishman, the latter immediately exclaimed: "By Jasus! you have made a lucky escape." The worthy Captain no doubt meant to infer that in the marines he would soon have gone to the bottom of the sea, while the regiment in which Cobbett had enlisted was, as he said, "one of the oldest and boldest in the whole army, and was at that time serving in that fine flourishing country, Nova Scotia."

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### CHAPTER III.

#### LIFE IN THE BRITISH ARMY.

COBBETT soon found promotion in the army. He spent his leisure hours in reading and study; he subscribed to a circulating library and read nearly every book in it—novels, plays, history, poetry, all with equal avidity.

One cannot help recollecting the fact that it was while Napoleon was a simple lieutenant at an obscure town in France that he laid in nearly all the knowledge he ever possessed; having, like Cobbett, read and re-read a whole library through.

Having thus acquired a stock of promiscuous knowledge, he set himself to master thoroughly one branch of practically useful knowledge, the grammar of his native tongue; and he thus describes the circumstances under which that study was pursued: "I learned grammar when I was a private soldier on the pay of sixpence a day. The edge of my berth, or that of the guard-bed, was my seat to study in; my knapsack was my book-case; a bit of board, lying on my lap, was my writing table; and the task did not demand anything like a year of my life. I had no

money to purchase candle or oil; in winter-time it was rarely that I could get any evening light but that of *the fire*, and only my *turn* even of that. To buy a pen or a sheet of paper, I was compelled to forego some portion of food, though in a state of half starvation; I had no moment of time that I could call my own; and I had to read and to write amidst the talking, laughing, singing, whistling, and brawling of at least half a score of the most thoughtless of men, and that too in the hours of their freedom from all control. Think not lightly of the farthing I had to give, now and then, for ink, pen or paper! That farthing was, alas, a *great sum* to me. I was as tall as I am now; I had great health and great exercise. The whole of the money, not expended for us at the market, was *twopence a week* for each man. I remember—and well I may—that, upon one occasion, I, after all absolutely necessary expenses, had, on a Friday, made shift to have a half-penny in reserve, which I had destined for the purchase of a red-herring in the morning; but, when I pulled off my clothes at night, so hungry then as to be hardly able to endure life, I found that I had lost my half-penny! I buried my head under the miserable sheet and rug, and cried like a child.”

Cobbett was encouraged in the study of grammar by the commandant of the garrison, Colonel Debbeig, who had found out that he wrote a fair hand and engaged him to copy his correspondence.

“I transcribed the famous correspondence,” he says, “between Colonel Debbeig and the Duke of Richmond, which ended in the good and gallant old colonel being stripped of the reward bestowed on him for his long and meritorious services. Being totally ignorant of the rules of grammar, I necessarily made many mistakes in copying, because no one can copy letter by letter, nor even word by word. The colonel saw my deficiency, and strongly recommended study. He enforced his advice

with a sort of injunction, and with a promise of reward in case of success. I procured me a Lowth's grammar, and applied myself to the study of it with unceasing assiduity, and not without some profit; for though it was considerable time before I fully comprehended all that I read, still I read and studied with such unremitted attention, that, at last, I could write without falling into any very gross errors. The pains I took cannot be described; I wrote the whole grammar out two or three times; I got it by heart; I repeated it every morning and every evening; and, when on guard, I imposed on myself the task of saying it all over once every time I was posted sentinel. To this exercise of my memory I ascribe the retentiveness of which I have since found it capable, and to the success with which it was attended, I ascribe the perseverance that has led to the acquirement of the little learning of which I am master. This study was, too, attended with another advantage: it kept me out of mischief. I was always sober and regular in my attendance; and not being a clumsy fellow, I met with none of those reproofs which disgust so many young men with the service."

Conduct like this is bound to succeed; in fact, this is the only conduct that *does* succeed; constant, patient, persevering application is always successful; and, therefore, we are not at all surprised at the result. While yet under twenty years of age, Cobbett was promoted from the rank of corporal to be sergeant-major, at one step, over the heads of thirty sergeants, all older than himself. This was marvelously rapid promotion for those days, and he attributes it to nothing but his industrious, studious, and attentive habits. "If I had to mount guard at *ten*," he says, "I was ready at *nine*; never did any man or any thing wait one moment for me. Being, at an age under twenty years, raised from corporal to sergeant-major at once, over the heads of thirty sergeants, I naturally should have been an object of envy and hatred; but this

habit of early rising and of rigid adherence to the precepts which I have given you, really subdued these passions; because every one felt that what I did, he had never done, and never could do. Before my promotion, a clerk was wanting to make out the morning report of the regiment. I rendered the clerk unnecessary; and, long before any other man was dressed for the parade, my work for the morning was all done, and I myself was on the parade, walking, in fine weather, for an hour perhaps. My custom was this: to get up, in summer, at daylight, and in winter at four o'clock; shave, dress, even to the putting of my sword-belt over my shoulder, and having my sword lying on the table before me, ready to hang by my side. Then I ate a bit of cheese, or pork and bread. Then I prepared my report, which was filled up as fast as the companies brought me in the materials. After this I had an hour or two to read before the time came for my duty out of doors, unless when the regiment or part of it went out to exercise in the morning. When this was the case, and the matter was left to me, I always had it on the ground in such time as that the bayonets glistened in the rising sun; a sight which gave me delight, of which I often think, but which I should in vain endeavor to describe. If the officers were to go out, eight or ten o'clock was the hour; sweating the men in the heat of the day, breaking in upon the time for cooking their dinner, putting all things out of order, and all men out of humor. When I was commander, the men had a long day of leisure before them: they could ramble into the town or into the woods; go to get raspberries, to catch birds, to catch fish, or to pursue any other recreation, and such of them as chose, and were qualified, to work at their trades. So that here, arising solely from the early habits of one very young man, were pleasant and happy days given to hundreds."

It was while at Chatham that, through his love of fun

and mischief, he got into his first scrape: "When I had the honor to serve his majesty, I was with seven of my comrades quartered upon a most bitter vixen of a lady. One evening when we had invested her fireside pretty closely, she began to abuse us in a way that put me in mind of Fielding's Mrs. Tow-wouse, to whom she bore no weak resemblance. As it happened, I had an old torn copy of 'Joseph Andrews,' which I fetched down-stairs. I began with a loud voice to read the description of the termagant in the romance; but before I had half done the landlady flew across the half-moon that we had formed round her fire, and fixing one claw in my hair, and the other in the book, began to pull and tear like a fury, swearing all the while that she would have me flogged for a libel. With some difficulty I disentangled myself from her clutches, and endeavored to smooth her down, by convincing her that it was a printed book I was reading,—a book, too, that was written probably before she was born, and that of course, it could not be *her* that I was reading about. 'You lie, you young dog!' says she; 'it was *about me*; it was *about me*; and about nobody else!' And she actually went and complained of me to the commanding officer, telling him that I sat in her presence reading a nasty, lying book, that abused her, and all the *genteel* women in the parish. The colonel sent for me, and having obtained an explanation of the business, gave me a piece of advice. . . . 'Very well, Cobbett,' says he, 'I am glad to find you are in no fault; but you are a young soldier, Cobbett, and if you like feather beds better than straw, and strong beer better than small, and if you would rather have a smack from a landlady's lips than from her fist, let me advise you always to examine her features well before you read to her the description of Mrs. Tow-wouse.'"

Cobbett's experience of the army was altogether so pleasant that he almost makes one feel like imitating his

example and turning soldier: "There is no situation," he says, "where merit is so sure to meet with reward as in a well-disciplined army. Those who command are obliged to reward it for their own ease and credit. . . . As promotion began to dawn, I grew impatient to get to my regiment, where I expected soon to bask under the rays of royal favor. The happy day of departure at last came; we set sail from Gravesend, and, after a short and pleasant passage, arrived at Halifax in Nova Scotia. When I first beheld the barren, not to say hideous, rocks at the entrance of the harbor, I began to fear that the master of the vessel had mistaken his way; for I perceived nothing of that fertility that my good recruiting-captain had dwelt on with so much delight.

"Nova Scotia had no other charm for me than that of novelty. Everything I saw was new: bogs, rocks, and stumps, mosquitoes and bull-frogs. Thousands of captains and colonels without soldiers, and of squires without stockings or shoes. . . . We stayed but a few weeks in Nova Scotia, being ordered to St. John's in the province of New Brunswick. Here, and at other places in the same province, we remained till the month of September, 1791, when the regiment was relieved, and sent home."

He remained in the army eight years, and when his regiment returned to England, he sought and obtained his discharge, and received the official thanks of the major and the colonel of the regiment, "in consideration of his good behavior and the services he had rendered the regiment." He then married—his bride was the daughter of a sergeant of artillery, and a thrifty and exemplary wife she made, her character being as firm as his own—and went over to St. Omer in France, where he spent six months—the happiest, he says, in his life—studying the language and literature and observing the customs and character of the French people.



The great central fact in Cobbett's life in the army is this: he was never idle, always active, always steady, always studying and learning something, constantly striving to get on; and this very activity and ambition of his enabled him to overcome the many temptations to vice and drunkenness by which he was surrounded. "When I was in the army," he says, "I was often tempted to take up the cards; but the words of my father came into my mind, and rescued me from the peril. . . . During this part of my life, I lived amongst, and was compelled to associate with the most beastly of drunkards, in a place where liquor was so cheap that even a soldier might get drunk every day; yet I never, during the whole time, even *tasted* of that liquor: my father's, and especially my mother's precepts were always at hand to protect me." That was where he had the advantage of them all: he possessed two great virtues, *sobriety* and *industry*, and these alone, with common capacity, will enable any man to get on in the world. Nor can I help noticing that these references of Cobbett's to the words of his father, and especially of his mother, present an encouraging example of the salutariness and effectiveness of parental admonition.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### CONDUCT IN LOVE AND COURTSHIP.

BUT before following him farther, I must here quote (from his *Advice*) two interesting passages in his Nova Scotian life concerning his conduct in love and courtship. "When I first saw my wife, she was thirteen years old, and I was about a month of twenty-one. . . . I sat in the room with her, for about an hour, in company with others, and I made up my mind that she was the very

girl for me. That I thought her beautiful is certain, for *that* I had always said should be an indispensable qualification; but I saw in her what I deemed marks of that sobriety of conduct of which I have said so much, and which has been by far the greatest blessing of my life. It was now dead of winter, and, of course, the snow was several feet deep on the ground, and the weather piercing cold. It was my habit, when I had done my morning's writing, to go out at break of day to take a walk on a hill, at the foot of which our barracks lay. In about three mornings after I had first seen her, I had, by an invitation to breakfast with her, got up two young men to join me in my walk; and our road lay by the house of her father and mother. It was hardly light; but she was out on the snow, scrubbing out a washing-tub. 'That's the girl for me,' said I, when we had got out of her hearing. From the day that I had first spoken to her, I never had a thought of her ever being the wife of any other man, more than I had a thought of her being transformed into a chest of drawers; and I formed my resolution at once, to marry her as soon as we could get permission, and to get out of the army as soon as I could. So that this matter was, at once, settled as firmly as if written in the book of fate. At the end of about six months, my regiment, and I along with it, were removed to Frederickton, a distance of a hundred miles, up the river St. John; and, which was worse, the artillery (to which her father belonged) were expected to go off to England a year or two before our regiment. The artillery went, and she along with them; and now it was that I acted the part becoming a real and sensible lover. I was aware that, when she got to that gay place, Woolwich, the house of her father and mother, necessarily visited by numerous persons not the most select, might become unpleasant to her. I did not like, besides, that she should continue to *work hard*. I had saved a hundred and fifty guineas,—the earnings of

my early hours, in writing for the paymaster, the quartermaster, and others,—in addition to the savings of my own pay. I sent her all my money before she sailed; and wrote to her to beg of her, if she found her home uncomfortable, to hire a lodging with respectable people; and, at any rate, not to spare the money, by any means; but to buy herself good clothes, and to live without hard work, until I arrived in England; and I, in order to induce her to lay out the money, told her that I should get plenty more before I came home.

“As the malignity of the devil would have it, we were kept abroad two years longer than our time, Mr. Pitt (England not being so tame then as she is now) having knocked up a dust with Spain about Nootka Sound. Oh how I cursed Nootka Sound, and poor bawling Pitt, too, I am afraid! At the end of *four* years, however, home I came; landed at Portsmouth, and got my discharge from the army by the great kindness of poor Lord Edward Fitzgerald, who was then the major of my regiment. I found my little girl *a servant of all work* (and hard work it was) *at five pounds a year*, in the house of a Captain Brisac; and, without saying hardly a word about the matter, she put into my hands the *whole of the hundred and fifty guineas unbroken!* Need I tell the reader what my feelings were? Need I tell kind-hearted English parents this anecdote, and what effect it must have produced on the minds of our children? Admiration of her conduct, and self-gratulation on this indubitable proof of the soundness of my own judgment, were added to my love of her beautiful person.”

While his intended bride was in England, he accidentally made the acquaintance of a very interesting Nova Scotian family, away out in the wilds of New Brunswick; and in this family was a young lady, the farmer's daughter, into whose society he was frequently attracted, and who came very near banishing the other “dear charmer”

from his thoughts. But the whole story is so beautifully and interestingly told by himself, that I will not dare to mar it by recapitulation. It is written in Cobbett's best style, and is a fine specimen of what he can do in the way of narrative and descriptive composition. I will only remark, before giving the passage, that Cobbett's conduct on this occasion was not entirely blameless; yet his error was such as any young man in his circumstances might have fallen into; he was imprudent, not heartless; for, compared with Goethe's conduct toward the beautiful and accomplished Frederika, whose love he had won, whom he had deserted, and afterwards allowed to be slandered without uttering a word in her defense, it was perfectly harmless.

“The Province of New Brunswick, in North America, in which I passed the years from the age of eighteen to that of twenty-six, consists, in general, of heaps of rocks, in the interstices of which grow the pine, the spruce, and various sorts of fir-trees; or, where the woods have been burned down, the bushes of the raspberry or those of the huckleberry. The province is cut asunder lengthwise by a great river, called the St. John, which is about two hundred miles in length, and, at half-way from the mouth, full a mile wide. Into this main river run innumerable smaller rivers, there called creeks. On the sides of these creeks the land is, in places, clear of rocks; it is, in these places, generally good and productive; the trees that grow here are the birch, the maple, and others of the deciduous class; natural meadows here and there present themselves; and some of these spots far surpass in rural beauty any other that my eyes ever beheld: the creeks abounding towards their sources in waterfalls of endless variety, as well in form as in magnitude, and always teeming with fish, while water-fowl enliven their surface, and while wild-pigeons, of the gayest plumage, flutter, in thousands upon thousands, amongst the branches of the

beautiful trees, which sometimes, for miles together, form an arch over the creeks.

“I, in one of my rambles in the woods, in which I took great delight, came to a spot at a very short distance from the source of one of these creeks. Here was every thing to delight the eye, and especially of one like me, who seem to have been born to love rural life, the trees and plants of all sorts. Here were about two hundred acres of natural meadow, interspersed with patches of maple-trees in various forms and of various extent; the creek (there about thirty miles from its point of joining the St. John) ran down the middle of the spot, which formed a sort of dish, the high and rocky hills rising all round it, except at the outlet of the creek, and these hills crowned with lofty pines; in the hills were the sources of the creek, the waters of which came down in cascades, for any one of which many a nobleman in England would, if he could transfer it, give a good slice of his fertile estate; and in the creek, at the foot of the cascades, there were, in the season, salmon, the finest in the world, and so abundant, and so easily taken, as to be used for manuring the land.

“If Nature, in her very best humor, had made a spot for the express purpose of captivating me, she could not have exceeded the efforts which she had here made. But I found something here besides these rude works of nature; I found something in the fashioning of which *man* had had something to do. I found a large and well-built log dwelling-house, standing (in the month of September) on the edge of a very good field of Indian corn, by the side of which there was a piece of buckwheat just then mowed. I found a homestead, and some very pretty cows. I found all the things by which an easy and happy farmer is surrounded; and I found still something besides all these, something that was destined to give me a great deal of pleasure and also a great deal of pain, both in their extreme degree; and both of which, in spite of the lapse of

forty years, now make an attempt to rush back into my heart.

“Partly from misinformation, and partly from miscalculation, I had lost my way; and, quite alone, but armed with my sword and a brace of pistols, to defend myself against the bears, I arrived at the log-house in the middle of a moonlight night, the hoar frost covering the trees, and the grass. A stout and clamorous dog, kept off by the gleaming of my sword, waked the master of the house, who got up, received me with great hospitality, got me something to eat, and put me into a feather-bed, a thing that I had been a stranger to for some years. I, being very tired, had tried to pass the night in the woods, between the trunks of two large trees, which had fallen side by side, and within a yard of each other. I had made a nest for myself of dry fern, and had made a covering by laying boughs of spruce across the trunks of the trees. But unable to sleep on account of the cold; becoming sick from the great quantity of water that I had drunk during the heat of the day, and being, moreover, alarmed at the noise of the bears, and lest one of them should find me in a defenseless state, I had roused myself up, and had crept along as well as I could. So that no hero of eastern romance ever experienced a more enchanting change.

“I had got into the house of one of those YANKEE LOYALISTS, who, at the close of the revolutionary war (which, until it had succeeded, was called a rebellion), had accepted of grants of land in the King’s Province of New Brunswick; and who, to the great honor of England, had been furnished with all the means of making new and comfortable settlements. I was suffered to sleep till breakfast time, when I found a table, the like of which I have since seen so many in the United States, loaded with good things. The master and mistress of the house, aged about fifty, were like what an English farmer and his wife were half-a-century ago. There were two sons, tall and stout,

who appeared to have come in from work, and the youngest of whom was about my age, then twenty-three. But there was *another member* of the family, aged nineteen, who (dressed according to the neat and simple fashion of New England, whence she had come with her parents five or six years before) had her long light-brown hair twisted nicely up, and fastened on the top of her head, in which head were a pair of lively blue eyes, associated with features of which that softness and that sweetness, so characteristic of American girls, were the predominant expressions, the whole being set off by a complexion indicative of glowing health, and forming, figure, movements, and all taken together, an assemblage of beauties, far surpassing any that I had ever seen but *once* in my life. That *once* was, too, *two years ago*; and, in such a case and at such an age, two years, two whole years, is a long, long while! It was a space as long as the eleventh part of my then life. Here was the *present* against the *absent*: here was the power of the *eyes* pitted against that of the *memory*: here were all the senses up in arms to subdue the influence of the thoughts: here was vanity, here was passion, here was the spot of all spots in the world, and here were also the life, and the manners and the habits, and the pursuits that I delighted in: here was everything that imagination can conceive, united in a conspiracy against the poor little brunette in England! What, then, did I fall in love at once with this bouquet of lilies and roses? Oh! by no means. I was, however, so enchanted with *the place*; I so much enjoyed its tranquility, the shade of the maple trees, the business of the farm, the sports of the water and of the woods, that I stayed there to the last possible minute, promising, at my departure, to come again as often as I possibly could; a promise which I most punctually fulfilled.

“Winter is the great season for jaunting and *dancing* (called *frollicking*) in America. In this Province the river

and the creeks were the only *roads* from settlement to settlement. In summer we travelled in *canoes* ; in winter in *sleighs* on the ice or snow. During more than two years I spent all the time I could with my Yankee friends: they were all fond of me: I talked to them about country affairs, my evident delight in which they took as a compliment to themselves: the father and mother treated me as one of their children; the sons as a brother; and the daughter, who was as modest and as full of sensibility as she was beautiful, in a way to which a chap much less sanguine than I was would have given the tenderest interpretation; which treatment I, especially in the last-mentioned case, most cordially repaid.

“It is when you meet in company with others of your own age that you are, in love matters, put most frequently to the test, and exposed to detection. The next-door neighbor might, in that country, be ten miles off. We used to have a frolic, sometimes at one house and sometimes at another. Here, where female eyes are very much on the alert, no secret can long be kept; and very soon father, mother, brothers, and the whole neighborhood looked upon the thing as certain, not excepting herself, to whom I, however, had never once even talked of marriage, and had never even told her that I *loved* her. But I had a thousand times done these by *implication*, taking into view the interpretation that she would naturally put upon my looks, appellations, and acts; and it was of this that I had to accuse myself. Yet I was not a *deceiver* ; for my affection for her was very great; I spent no really pleasant hours but with her; I was uneasy if she showed the slightest regard for any other young man; I was unhappy if the smallest matter affected her health or spirits: I quitted her in dejection, and returned to her with eager delight: many a time when I could get leave but for a day, I paddled in a canoe two whole succeeding nights, in order to pass that day with her. If this was not love, it was first



cousin to it; for as to any *criminal* intention, I no more thought of it, in her case, than if she had been my sister. Many times I put to myself the questions: 'What am I at? Is not this wrong? *Why do I go?*' But still I went.

"Then, further in my excuse, my *prior engagement*, though carefully left unalluded to by both parties, was, in that thin population, and owing to the singular circumstances of it, and to the great talk that there always was about me, *perfectly well known* to her and all her family. It was matter of so much notoriety and conversation in the Province, that GENERAL CARLETON (brother of the late Lord Dorchester) who was the Governor when I was there, when he, about fifteen years afterwards, did me the honour, on his return to England, to come and see me at my house in Duke Street, Westminster, asked, before he went away, to see my *wife*, of whom *he had heard so much* before her marriage. So that here was no *deception* on my part; but still I ought not to have suffered even the most distant hope to be entertained by a person so innocent, so amiable, for whom I had so much affection, and to whose heart I had no right to give a single twinge. I ought, from the very first, to have prevented the possibility of her ever feeling pain on my account. I was young, to be sure; but I was old enough to know what was my duty in this case, and I ought, dismissing my own feelings, to have had the resolution to perform it.

"The *last parting* came; and now came my just punishment! The time was known to everybody, and was irrevocably fixed; for I had to move with a regiment, and the embarkation of a regiment is an *epoch* in a thinly-settled province.. To describe this parting would be too painful even at this distant day, and with this frost of age upon my head. The kind and virtuous father came forty miles to see me, just as I was going on board in the river. *His* looks and words I have never forgotten. As the ves-

sel descended, she passed the mouth of *that creek*, which I had so often entered with delight; and though England, and all that England contained, were before me, I lost sight of this creek with an aching heart.

“On what trifles turn the great events in the life of man! If I had received a *cool* letter from my intended wife; if I had only heard a rumor of anything from which fickleness in her might have been inferred; if I had found in her any, even the smallest, abatement of affection; if she had but let go any one of the hundred strings by which she held my heart; if any of these had occurred, never would the world have heard of me. Young as I was; able as I was as a soldier; proud as I was of the admiration and commendations of which I was the object; fond as I was, too, of the command, which, at so early an age, my rare conduct and great natural talents had given me; sanguine as was my mind, and brilliant as were my prospects; yet I had seen so much of the meannesses, the unjust partialities, the insolent pomposity, the disgusting dissipations of that way of life, that I was weary of it; I longed to exchange my fine laced coat for the Yankee farmer’s homespun, to be where I should never behold the supple crouch of servility, and never hear the hectoring voice of authority again; and, on the lonely banks of this branch-covered creek, which contained (she out of the question) everything congenial to my taste and dear to my heart, I, unapplauded, unfeared, unenvied and uncalumniated, should have lived and died.”

## CHAPTER V.

## THE COURT-MARTIAL.

COBBETT's connection with the army, however, was not destined to end agreeably to all parties. On obtaining his discharge from the regiment, he made an accusation of dishonesty against four of its officers, and a day was fixed for trial by Court-martial. But before the day of trial arrived, Cobbett had set out for France, and thus failed to appear to make good his accusation. Failing, after diligent inquiry, to find any trace of him, the court proceeded with the trial, which resulted in the acquittal of the accused.

As this is a very serious matter, of which much has been made by the enemies of Cobbett, I think it right to give his defense—of the very existence of which some writers about him seem to be unaware—in his own words; merely premising that in 1809 his adversaries had published a pamphlet, giving an account of the Court-martial, which must have been written by somebody having access to the government archives, for it contained documents found only in those archives. Cobbett says the extracts from the letters are garbled and imperfect in several particulars. This pamphlet, which was published for the express purpose of injuring his character, and destroying his influence as an opposition writer, was distributed by tens of thousands over the county in which he resided, and spread abroad for gratuitous distribution. In a letter to the people of Hampshire concerning this pamphlet, he gives an account of his progress in the army and his honorable discharge, and then says:

“While I was a corporal, I was made *clerk* to the regiment. In a very short time, the whole of the business, in that way, fell into my hands; and at the end of about a

year, neither adjutant, paymaster, or quartermaster could move an inch without my assistance. . . . As I advanced in experience, I felt less and less respect for those whom I was compelled to obey. One suffers injustice from men of great endowment of mind with much less of heart-burning than from men whom one cannot help despising; and if my officers had been men of manifest superiority of mind, I should perhaps not have so soon conceived the project of bringing them, or some of them at least, to shame and punishment for the divers flagrant breaches of the law committed by them, and for their manifold, their endless wrongs against the soldiers and against the public.

“This project was conceived so early as the year 1787, when an affair happened that first gave me a full insight into regimental justice. It was shortly this: that the quartermaster, who had the issuing of the men’s provisions to them, *kept about a fourth part of it to himself*. This, the old sergeants told me, had been the case for many years; and they were quite astonished and terrified at the idea of my complaining of it. This I did, however, but the reception I met with convinced me that I must never make another complaint till I got safe to England, and safe out of the reach of that most curious of courts, a Court-martial.

“From this time forward, I began to collect materials for an exposure, upon my return to England. I had ample opportunities for this, being the keeper of all the books, of every sort, in the regiment, and knowing the whole of its affairs better than any other man in it. But, the winter previous to our return to England, I thought it necessary to make extracts from the books, lest the books themselves should be destroyed. And here begins the history of the famous Court-martial. In order to be able to *prove* that these extracts were correct, it was necessary that I should have a *witness* as to their being true

copies. This was a very ticklish point. One foolish step here would have sent me down to the ranks with a pair of bloody shoulders. Yet it was necessary to have the witness. I hesitated many months. At one time I had given the thing up. I dreamt twenty times, I daresay, of my papers being discovered and of being tried and flogged half to death. At last, however, some fresh act of injustice towards us made me set all danger at defiance. I opened my project to a corporal, whose name was William Bestland, who wrote in the office under me, who was a very honest fellow, who was very much bound to me for my goodness to him, and who was, with the sole exception of myself, the only sober man in the whole regiment.

“To work we went, and during a long winter, while the rest were boozing and snoring, we gutted no small part of the regimental books, rolls, and other documents. Our way was this: to take a copy, sign it with our names, and clap the regimental seal to it, so that we might be able to swear to it when produced in court. All these papers were put into a little box, which I myself had made for the purpose. When we came to Portsmouth, there was a talk of searching all the boxes, etc., which gave us great alarm; and induced us to take out all the papers, put them in a bag, and trust them to a custom-house officer who conveyed them on shore, to his own house, whence I removed them a few days after.

“Thus prepared, I went to London, and on the 14th of January, 1792, I wrote to the then Secretary-at-War, Sir George Yonge, stating my situation, my business with him, and my intentions; enclosing him a letter of petition from myself to the King, stating the substance of all the complaints I had to make; and which letter I requested Sir George Yonge to lay before the King.

“I waited from the 14th to the 24th of January without receiving any answer at all, and then all I heard was

that he wished to see me at the War-office. At the War-office I was shown into an antechamber amongst numerous anxious-looking men, who, every time the door which led to the great man was opened, turned their eyes that way with a motion as regular and as uniform as if they had been drilled to it. These people eyed me from head to foot, and I never shall forget their look when they saw that I was admitted into paradise without being detained a single moment in purgatory.

“Sir George Yonge *heard my story*; and that was all he apparently wanted of me. I was to hear from him again in a *day or two*; and, after waiting for *fifteen* days, without hearing from him, or any one else, upon the subject, I wrote to him again, reminding him that I had from the first told him that I had *no other business in London*; that my stock of money was necessarily small; and *that to detain me in London was to ruin me*. Indeed, I had in the whole world but about 200 guineas, which was a great deal for a person in my situation to have saved. Every week in London, especially as, by way of episode, I had now married, took at least a couple of guineas from my stock. I therefore began to be very impatient, and indeed to be very suspicious that military justice in England was pretty nearly akin to military justice in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

“The letter I now wrote was dated on the 10th of February, to which I got an answer on the 15th, though the answer might have been written in a moment. I was, in this answer, informed that it was the intention to try the accused on *only part of the charges* which I had preferred; and from a new-modeled list of charges sent me by the Judge-Advocate on the 23d of February, it appeared that, even of those charges that were suffered to remain, *the parts the most material were omitted*. But this was not all. I had all along insisted that, unless the Court-martial was held in London, I could not think of

appearing at it; because, if held in a garrisoned place like Portsmouth, the thing must be a mere mockery. In spite of this, however, the Judge-Advocate's letter of the 23d February informed me that the court was to be held in Portsmouth or Chelsea. I remonstrated against this, and demanded that my remonstrance should be laid before the King, which, on the 29th, the Judge-Advocate promised should be done by himself; but on the 5th of March the Judge-Advocate informed me that he had laid my remonstrance before—*whom*, think you? Not the King, but *the accused parties*; who, of course, thought the court ought to assemble at Portsmouth or Chelsea, and doubtless for the very reasons that led me to object to its being held there.

“Plainly seeing what was going forward, I, on the 7th of March, made, *in a letter to Mr. Pitt*, a representation of the whole case, giving him a history of the obstacles I had met with. . . . This letter (which, by the by, the public robbers [who published the pamphlet] have not published) had the effect of changing the place of the Court-martial, which was now to be held in London; but, as to my other ground of complaint, the leaving of the *regimental books unsecured*, it had no effect at all; and, it will be recollected, that without those books, there could be, as to most of the weighty charges, no proof produced without bringing forward Corporal Bestland, and the danger of doing that will be presently seen.”

On the 22d of January he wrote to Sir George Yonge, desiring him to have the regimental books secured, that is, taken out of the reach of the parties accused. Two days after this, Sir George assured him in writing that he had taken care to have these documents secured. Yet, notwithstanding further assurances to the same effect, it now appeared from the pamphlet that “the first time any order for securing the books was given was *on the 18th of March*.” “There is quite enough in this fact alone,”

continues Cobbett, "to show the public what sort of a chance I stood of obtaining justice."

"Without these written documents," he continues, "nothing of importance could be proved, unless the non-commissioned officers and men of the regiment should happen to get the better of their dread of the lash; and even then they could speak only from memory. All, therefore, depended upon those written documents as to the principal charges. Therefore, as the Court-martial was to assemble on the 24th of March, I went down to Portsmouth on the 20th, in order to know for certain what had become of the books; and I found, as I indeed suspected was the case, that they *had never been secured at all*; that they had been left in the hands of the accused from the 14th of January to the very hour of trial; and that, in short, my request as to this point, the positive condition as to this most important matter, had been totally disregarded.

"There remained, then, nothing to rest upon with *safety*, but our extracts, confirmed by the evidence of Bestland, the corporal, who had signed them along with me; and this I had solemnly engaged with him not to have recourse to, unless he was first out of the army; that is to say, out of the reach of the vindictive and bloody lash. He was a very little fellow, not more than five feet high; and had been set down to be discharged when he went to England; but there was a suspicion of his connection with me, and therefore they resolved to keep him. It would have been cruel, and even perfidious, to have brought him forward under such circumstances; and, as there was no chance of doing anything without him, I resolved not to appear at the Court-martial, unless the discharge of Bestland was first granted. Accordingly, on the 20th of March, I wrote from Fratton, a village near Portsmouth, to the Judge-Advocate, stating over again all the obstacles that had been thrown in my



way, complaining particularly that the books and documents had been left in possession of the accused, contrary to my urgent request, and to the positive assurances of the Secretary-at-War, and concluding by demanding the discharge of a man, whom I should name, as the only condition upon which I would attend the Court-martial. I requested him to send me an answer by the next day, at night, at my former lodging; and told him, that, unless such answer was received, he and those to whom my repeated applications had been made might do what they pleased with their Court-martial; for that I confidently trusted that a few days would put me beyond the scope of their power.

“No answer came, and as I had learned, in the meanwhile, that there was a design to prosecute me for *sedition*, that was an additional motive to be quick in my movements. As I was going down to Portsmouth, I met several of the sergeants coming up, together with the music-master; and as they had none of them been in America, I wondered what they could be going to London for; but, upon my return, I was told by a Captain Lane, who had been in the regiment, that they had been brought up to swear, that, at an entertainment given to them by me before my departure from the regiment, I had drunk, ‘*the destruction of the House of Brunswick.*’ This was false, but I knew that that was no reason why it should not be *sworn* by such persons and in such a case. I had talked pretty freely upon the occasion alluded to; but I had neither said nor thought anything against the King, and as to the House of Brunswick, I hardly knew what it meant. My head was filled with the corruptions and the baseness in the army. I knew nothing at all about politics. Nor would any threat of this sort have induced me to get out of the way for a moment; though it certainly would, if I had known my danger; for glorious ‘Jacobinical’ times were just then beginning. Of this, however,

I knew nothing at all. I did not know what the *Suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act* meant.

“When you have a mind to do a thing, every trifle is an additional motive. Lane, who had enlisted me, and who had always shown great kindness toward me, told me they would send me to Botany Bay; and I now verily believe that if I had remained, I should have furnished a pretty good example to those who wished to correct military abuses. I did not, however, leave England from this motive. I could not obtain a chance of success without exposing the back of my poor, faithful friend, Bestland, which, even if I had not pledged myself not to do, I would not have done. It was useless to appear unless I could have tolerable fair-play; and, besides, it seemed better to leave the whole set to do as they pleased, than to be made a mortified witness of what it was quite evident they had resolved to do.”

Leaving the reader to form his own opinion on this defense, I shall reserve what I have to say on the matter until I have got a little farther on in this history, and have recounted some other circumstances necessary to be considered in connection with this matter.

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## CHAPTER VI.

LIFE AS A TEACHER AND AUTHOR.—BECOMES THE CHAMPION OF  
GEORGE III.

THE progress of the great French Revolution (1792) was now beginning to create alarm, and Cobbett having read the Abbé Raynal's fascinating book on the American colonies, resolved to emigrate to America. Before doing so, however, he determined to visit Paris, and had reached Abbeville on his way thither, when, hearing of the dethronement of the King and the massacre of his guards,

he immediately changed his route and traveled towards Havre-de-Grace, which he reached after much difficulty and many interruptions. "He travelled in a calèche," say his sons, "and as the people were at every town looking out for 'aristocrats,' they stopped him so frequently, and the police examined all his things so scrupulously, making him read all his papers in French to them, that he did not reach Havre till the 16th of August." He had left Abbeville on the 11th. He probably on this occasion owed the preservation of his liberty, perhaps of his life, to his knowledge of the French tongue.

Arriving in Philadelphia in October, 1792, he soon left that city for Wilmington, on the Delaware, twenty-eight miles from Philadelphia, where he found a number of French emigrants; and having now a good knowledge of French as well as of his native tongue, he soon found profitable employment as a teacher of English to Frenchmen. He returned, however, in a short time to Philadelphia, where, according to the testimony of his sons, he earned between four and five hundred pounds a year in teaching English to Frenchmen—a sum which, I imagine, few teachers at the present day earn at the same or a similar occupation. It was at this time that he composed, in the French language, his well-known grammar, "*Le Maître d'Anglais*;" a grammar intended for Frenchmen to learn English. It is a work of sterling value, which I found still in use in France in 1862, *revue* and *corrigée* by various editors. What other French grammar can boast of active, vigorous life, after an existence of nearly a hundred years?

On coming to America, Cobbett seems to have turned his thoughts towards serving the United States Government in some capacity; for he sent to Mr. Jefferson, then Secretary of State in the Washington Administration, a letter of recommendation from Mr. Adams, who was at that time American Ambassador at the Hague, to whom

Cobbett had been recommended by a Mr. Short, and received the following reply :

“PHILADELPHIA, Nov. 5, 1792.

“SIR,—In acknowledging the receipt of your favor of the 2d instant, I wish it were in my power to announce to you any way in which I could be useful to you. Mr. Short’s assurances of your merit would be a sufficient inducement to me. Public offices in our government are so few, and of so little value, as to offer no resource to talent. When you shall have been here some small time, you will be able to judge in what way you can set out with the best prospect of success, and if I can serve you in it, I shall be very happy to do it.

“I am, Sir, your very humble Servant,

“THOMAS JEFFERSON.”

I shall have a word to say regarding this letter by and by; but I cannot help remarking here, that it seems Cobbett came to America with such disgust for the government of his own country, at whose hands he had, according to his own account, received such unfair treatment, and into the corruptions of whose army-system he had had such a close view, that he had made up his mind to become a citizen of the United States, and if possible to serve the Republic under Washington. He almost confesses as much in his announcement of principles in the opening number of the new paper which he started on his return to England in 1800: “In the days of youth and ignorance, I was led to believe that *comfort, freedom and virtue were* EXCLUSIVELY *the lot of* REPUBLICANS. A very short trial convinced me of my error, admonished me to repent of my folly, and urged me to compensate for the injustice of the opinion which I conceived.”

In serving the Republic he would, of course, have become an American citizen, and had Mr. Jefferson given him some position in the government, what a different history would have been that of William Cobbett!

Cobbett's first production as an author was prompted by certain occurrences on the arrival in America of the celebrated Dr. Priestley, the radical reformer and Unitarian philosopher. Priestley had been so roughly handled in England by his own countrymen, that he determined to emigrate to the United States, and on arriving in New York (1793), he was gladly received by a deputation of admirers, who presented him with addresses of welcome. In these addresses and in the reply of Dr. Priestley, such disparaging allusions were made to England and her government, that it roused Cobbett's ire to see an Englishman treating the government of his own country so disrespectfully, and suffering it to be so disrespectfully treated by others. Cobbett wrote a pamphlet on the affair, entitled "*Observations on the Emigration of a Martyr*;" which is a strong attack on Priestley and his doctrines, and in which he contends that the philosopher had no good reason to complain of the treatment he received, and that the country he left was by no means such a despotism as he represented it.

In one of his letters to Mr. Pitt, in 1804, Cobbett gives an account of the matter; and it is curious to observe by what an apparently accidental circumstance he became a writer. "It is now, sir, ten years," he says, "since I first took up the pen with an intention to write for the press on political subjects; and the occasion of my doing so is too curious in itself, as well as of too much importance as to the sequel, not to be described somewhat in detail. At the memorable epoch of Doctor Priestley's emigration to America, I followed, in the city of Philadelphia, the profession of teacher of the English language to Frenchmen. Newspapers were a luxury for which I had little relish, and which, if I had been ever so fond of them, I had not time to enjoy. The manifestoes, therefore, of the Doctor, upon his landing in that country, and the malicious attacks upon the monarchy and monarch of

England, which certain societies in America thereupon issued through the press, would, had it not been for a circumstance purely accidental, have escaped, probably forever, not only my animadversion, but my knowledge of their existence. One of my scholars, who was a person that we in England would call a coffee-house politician, chose, for once, to read his newspaper by way of lesson; and it happened to be the very paper which contained the addresses presented to Doctor Priestley at New York, together with his replies. My scholar, who was a sort of republican, or, at best, but half a monarchist, appeared delighted with the invectives against England, to which he was very much disposed to add. Those Englishmen who have been abroad, particularly if they have had time to make a comparison between the country they are in and that which they left, well know how difficult it is, upon occasions such as I have been describing, to refrain from expressing their indignation and resentment; and there is not, I trust, much reason to suppose that I should, in this respect, experience less difficulty than another. The dispute was as warm as might reasonably be expected, between a Frenchman, uncommonly violent even for a Frenchman, and an Englishman not remarkable for *sang froid*; and the result was, a declared resolution, on my part, to write and publish a pamphlet in defense of my country, which pamphlet he pledged himself to answer. His pledge was forfeited: it is known that mine was not.


“Thus, sir, it was that I became a writer on politics. ‘Happy for you,’ you will say, ‘if you had continued at your verbs and your nouns!’ Perhaps it would; but the fact absorbs the reflection: whether it was for my good, or otherwise, I entered on the career of political writing; and, without adverting to the circumstances under which others have entered on it, I think it will not be believed that the pen was ever taken up from a motive more pure and laudable.”

The following fable, directed against the democrats, occurs in this his first pamphlet. Sir Henry Bulwer thinks it recalls the style of Swift, in the "Tale of a Tub," which work Cobbett admired so much. Mr. Watson destroys the whole pith of the fable, and especially that which gives it a resemblance to Swift, by omitting or changing certain words in it which, though coarse, are in no way corrupting:

"In a pot-shop, well stocked with wares of all sorts, a discontented, ill-formed pitcher unluckily bore the sway. One day after the mortifying neglect of several customers, 'Gentlemen,' said he, addressing himself to his brown brethren in general, 'Gentlemen, with your permission, we are a set of tame fools, without ambition, without courage. Condemned to the vilest uses, we suffer all without murmuring. Let us dare to declare ourselves, and we shall soon see the difference. That superb ewer, which, like us, is but earth; those gilded jars, vases, china, and in short, all those elegant nonsenses, must yield to our strength, and give place to our superior merit.'

"This civic harangue was received with peals of applause; and the pitcher, chosen president, became the organ of the assembly. Some, however, more moderate than the rest, attempted to calm the minds of the multitude; but all those which are called jordens became intractable. Eager to vie with the bowls and cups, they were impatient, almost to madness, to quit their obscure abodes, to shine upon the table, kiss the lip, and ornament the cupboard.

"In vain did a wise water-jug—some say it was a platter—make them a long and serious discourse upon the peacefulness of their vocation. 'Those,' he says, 'who are destined to great employments, are rarely the most happy. We are all of the same clay, it is true; but he who made us formed us for different functions. One is



for ornament, another is for use. The posts the most important are often the most necessary. Our employments are extremely different, and so are our talents.'

"This had a wonderful effect. The most stupid began to open their ears; and perhaps it would have succeeded, if a grease-pot had not cried out in a decisive tone, 'You reason like an ass; to the devil with you and your silly lessons!'

"Now the scale was turned again. All the horde of pans, pitchers, and jordens applauded the superior eloquence and reasoning of the grease-pot. In short, they determined on the enterprise. But a dispute arose who should be chief; all could command, but none obey. It was then you might have heard a clatter: pots, pans, and pitchers, mugs, jugs, and jordens, all put themselves in motion at once; and so wisely and with so much vigor were their operations conducted, that the whole was soon changed, not into china, but into *rubbish*."

This fable is, I think, worthy of a place beside the ancient fable of the Stomach and the Members of the Body, which Shakespeare, in *Coriolanus*, causes a patrician to repeat for the edification of the plebeians, the democrats of the Roman republic.

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## CHAPTER VII.

THE POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE UNITED STATES.—COBBETT SIDES WITH WASHINGTON'S PARTY.

THERE was now a great excitement in this country over the French Revolution, and the difference of opinion and the discussions regarding it were so sharp and so widespread, and the interest in it so intense and absorbing, that even the acts of our own government were approved or condemned according to their influence on France, and



sentiments for and against the French Revolutionists were the distinguishing characteristics of our own political parties. The friends of the French Revolutionists (or, as Cobbett always called them, of the Sans-culottes) applauded their acts throughout, and advocated alliance with them, the sending them material aid, and a declaration of war against their enemies; while the other party advocated non-interference in the quarrels of France or in those of any other European power. At the head of the latter party, the Federalists, were Washington and Hamilton; at the head of the former, the Republicans, were Jefferson and Randolph. The Federalists favored commercial intercourse with England and the moulding of our Constitution in some things after that of England; while the Republicans desired exclusive intercourse with France, the imitating of everything French, and the avoidance of everything English. Washington is said to have been the only man in America who from the first, like Edmund Burke in England, rightly understood the character of the French Revolution; and it was by this knowledge, and by firmly holding on in the path of duty, that he saved the country from a ruinous war. Thus it was, too, as everybody familiar with American history will remember, that his steadfast opposition to the schemes of the French faction brought down unmerited opprobrium and reproaches upon his venerable head.

Cobbett naturally sympathized with the party which favored intercourse with his native land; and he now began to make use of his new-found instrument of power, the pen, to show why Americans should turn their sympathies towards England rather than towards France. He sided, therefore, with Washington's party. In a Federalist paper of the day, *The Gazette of the United States*, appears this significant paragraph: "The enemies of the President of the United States, and of the Federal Government, pretend to be affronted that a man born in Eng-

land should presume to say a civil thing of the character of George Washington. The consistency of this will appear, when the public are assured, that very few of the abusive scribblers who slander his reputation have one drop of American blood in their veins." The truth of this latter assertion was of course denied, and all the writers in question were declared to be true-born native Americans; but the point was well made, nevertheless.

When Washington's administration succeeded in concluding, conditionally, the Jay treaty of commerce with England, and while the treaty was awaiting confirmation by the Senate, Cobbett mightily aided the favorable reception which that treaty received from the Senate, by a brilliant and conclusive essay in its support. In this essay he clearly refuted the arguments of its opponents, and plainly showed the superior advantages of intercourse with England, as compared with those resulting from intercourse with France. The treaty was confirmed, and the victory was on the English side. "The importance of that victory to England," says Cobbett, in the same letter to Pitt, "it would, perhaps, be difficult to render intelligible to the mind of Lord Melville, without the aid of a comparison; and, therefore, it may be necessary to observe, that it was infinitely more important than all his victories in the West Indies put together, which latter victories cost England thirty thousand men, and fifty millions of money." And it was to the service rendered by this essay that Windham referred, when he declared in the House of Commons, whilst defending Cobbett against an attack by Sheridan, that he had in America "rendered such service to his country as entitled him to a statue of gold."

## CHAPTER VIII.

## IN THE THICK OF THE FIGHT.

COBBETT became a thorn in the side of the French party, whom he attacked with such vehemence and in a style so mercilessly severe that they nicknamed him "Peter Porcupine;" a name which he immediately assumed as his *nom de plume*, and which he rendered famous before he left the country. He published against the French sympathizing party a number of pamphlets, of which it is only necessary to mention the titles to show their character: "The Dispute with England," "A Bone to Gnaw for the Democrats," "A Kick for a Bite," and "A New Year's Gift to the Democrats." In these he vividly displayed the atrocities of the Sans-culottes, and showed what dastardly wretches those men were with whom the Democrats in America sympathized.

In 1797, he published a daily paper, which he called "Porcupine's Gazette," in which he continued to attack the French faction with his accustomed energy, and to defend his own country and its laws against all comers. In this employment he created such a swarm of enemies that six different pamphlets or pasquinades, containing all manner of calumnies were written and published about him. The titles of these pamphlets are sufficient to indicate their character: "A Roaster for Peter Porcupine," "The History of a Porcupine," "A Pill for Porcupine," "The Impostor Detected," "The little Innocent Porcupine's Hornet-Nest," "The last Dying Speech and Confession of Peter Porcupine." Some of them contained such shameless slanders, that, in sheer self-defense, he was obliged to have his marriage certificate and his certificate of discharge from the army recertified and published. We have sometimes heard it said that there were more gentle-

*men* in this country in the time of Washington than there are nowadays; but we think it will be found that in party warfare the gentlemen were then about as rare, or, if you please, as rancorous and as slanderous, as they are now. Cobbett was accused of almost as many crimes as Horace Greeley or James Gordon Bennett have been accused of, and with about equal justice. To meet this fire of pasquinades and lampoons, he, like the prairie-hunter, lit another fire, and published another pamphlet on the same subject, but of an opposite tendency, entitled, "The True Adventures of Peter Porcupine," in which he gives an interesting account of his singular career, and makes some vigorous thrusts at his enemies. This is the autobiography from which I have already made several extracts. Of course, as an apologist of England, it did not suit him, in this production, to take any notice of the Court-martial affair in which he was once so vitally interested. If his enemies had found *that* out, what a handle to thrash him with they would have made of it! It is also an example of how slowly information spread in those days. With such notoriety as Cobbett had attained, such a thing would not, at the present time, have remained a fortnight concealed.

Cobbett was by no means discouraged by this flood of abuse; on the contrary, it is pretty evident he rather enjoyed it, for he was seldom more completely in his element than when attacking and being attacked. Witness the opening paragraphs of his remarks on these pamphlets:

" 'DEAR FATHER,—When you used to set me off in the morning, dressed in my blue smock-frock and woollen spatterdashes, with my bag of bread and cheese and bottle of small-beer swung over my shoulder on the little crook that my old godfather Boxall gave me, little did you imagine that I should one day become so great a man as to have my picture stuck in the windows, and

have four whole books published about me in the course of one week.' Thus begins a letter which I wrote to my father yesterday morning, and which, if it reaches him, will make the old man drink an extraordinary pot of ale to my health. Heaven bless him! I think I see him now, by his old-fashioned fireside, reading the letter to his neighbors. 'Ay, ay,' says he, 'WILL will stand his ground wherever he goes.' And so I will, father, in spite of all the hell of democracy.

"When I had the honor to serve King George, I was elated enough at the putting on of my worsted shoulder-knot, and afterward my silver-laced coat. What must my feelings be, then, upon seeing half a dozen authors, all *doctors* or the devil knows what, writing about me at one time, and ten times that number of printers, bookbinders, and booksellers, bustling, running and flying about in all directions, to announce my fame to the impatient public? . . . The public will certainly excuse me if, after all this, I should begin to think myself a person of some importance.

"At the very moment that I am writing, these sorry fellows [the authors of the pamphlets] are hugging themselves in the thought that they have silenced me, *cut me up*, as they call it. It would require other pens than theirs to silence me. I shall keep plodding on in my old way, as I used to do at the plough; and I think it will not be looked upon as any very extraordinary trait of vanity to say, that Porcupine will be read when the very names of their bungling pamphlets are forgotten."

It was at this time that a circumstance happened, which, like others of a similar character, of which we will by and by learn, does him great honor. After his prosecution and conviction for libel against the government in England in 1809, he wrote a defence of his conduct, in which, while defending himself against the charge of writing for *base lucre*, he states the following circum-

stance: "In America the King's minister made, and not at all improperly, offers of service to me, on the part of the ministry at home. The offer was put as an offer of service to any relations that I might have in England, and my answer was, that if I could *earn anything myself* wherewith to assist my relations, I should assist them; but that I would not be the cause of their receiving anything out of the *public purse*. Mr. Liston, then our minister to America, can bear testimony to the truth of this statement. . . . From my outset as a writer to the present hour, I have always preferred principle to gain."

Being one day in a shop in Philadelphia, unknown, or unobserved, he heard himself charactertized by the English consul as "a wild fellow;" upon which he remarks, in his *Gazette*, "I shall only observe, that when the king bestows upon me about £500 sterling a year, perhaps I may become a *tame fellow*, and hear my master, my friends, and my parents belied and execrated, without saying a single word in their defence."



## CHAPTER IX.

### HOW HE DEFIED THE DEMOCRATS.

IN 1796, having quarrelled with his publisher—who, by the bye, seems to have received the lion's share in the profits of Cobbett's productions, for when Cobbett offered to repurchase them from him, after the issue of several editions, for the same sum he had received for the original copyrights, the offer was refused—he determined to publish his own works himself in future, and opened a shop in Philadelphia as bookseller and publisher. He must be allowed to describe in his own words the very characteristic manner in which he did this:

“The eyes of the Democrats and the French, who still lorded it over the city, and who still owed me a mutual grudge, were fixed upon me. I thought my situation somewhat perilous. Such truths as I had published, no man had dared to utter in the United States since the Rebellion. I knew that these truths had mortally offended the leading men among the Democrats, who could, at any time, muster a mob quite sufficient to destroy my house and murder me. I had not a friend to whom I could look with any reasonable hope of receiving sufficient support; and, as to the law, I had seen too much of Republican justice to expect anything but persecution from that quarter. In short, there were in Philadelphia about ten thousand persons, all of whom would have rejoiced to see me murdered; and there might probably be two thousand who would have been very sorry for it; but not above fifty of whom would have stirred an inch to save me.

“As the time approached for opening my shop, my friends grew more anxious for my safety. It was recommended to me to be cautious how I exposed at my window anything that might provoke the people; and, above all, not to put up any *aristocratical portraits*, which would certainly cause my windows to be demolished.

“I saw the danger, but also saw that I must, at once, set all danger at defiance, or live in everlasting subjection to the prejudices and caprice of a democratical mob. I resolved on the former; and as my shop was to open on a Monday morning, I employed myself all day on Sunday in preparing an exhibition that I thought would put the courage and power of my enemies to the test. I put up in my windows, which were very large, all the portraits that I had in my possession of *kings, queens, princes and nobles*. I had all the English ministry, several of the bishops and judges, the most famous admirals, and, in short, every picture that I thought likely to excite rage in the enemies of Great Britain.

“Early on the Monday morning I took down my shutters. Such a sight had not been seen in Philadelphia for twenty years. Never, since the beginning of the Rebellion, had any one dared to hoist at his window the portrait of George III.

“In order to make the test as perfect as possible, I had put up some of the worthies of the Revolution, and had found out fit companions for them. I had coupled Franklin and Marat together, and in another place McKean and Ankerstrom.”

As might have been expected, this daring exhibition created a storm of rage and indignation among his enemies, the Democrats; but, although one fellow threatened in an anonymous letter to have his house burnt if he did not remove the obnoxious pictures, no violence whatever was offered to him, and the discreeter portion of the community, as his biographer of 1835 says, admired the courage of the Englishman, though they deplored the zeal of the partisan.



## CHAPTER X.

### THE COURT-MARTIAL AGAIN.—AN ILL-FOUNDED ACCUSATION.

It is here that we have to recur to the Court-martial affair. Mr. Watson, Cobbett's most-often-quoted biographer, in finding that Cobbett hired his house and shop at a rent of \$1200 a year, and paid one year's rent in advance, thinks it necessary to unfold a peculiar theory of his own to explain “by what means Cobbett could have acquired sufficient pecuniary means to take such a house, and to stock it with the necessary materials for commencing business.” He says: “When he quitted England for France, he was possessed of a hundred and fifty guineas, which Mrs. Cobbett had returned to him at Woolwich;



and he may have had another hoard of guineas earned in America the same way as the first. But these supplies must have been pretty well exhausted during his six-months stay in France, with his wife, and his passage to America with her. On arriving in America, he obtained tuition, which yielded him about a hundred and forty dollars a month—or, as his sons put it, between four and five hundred pounds a year; and he had received eighty pounds for his Porcupine pamphlets. He also made some translations from the French for the Bradfords, one of which was Martin's 'Law of Nations,' dedicated to Washington. He had now been four years in America, and, with his frugal way of living, he might have saved a few score pounds, if his income was as great every year as his sons represent it. But it would appear that he could hardly have saved so much as to enable him to enter on a large bookselling business in expensive premises. We shall find, too, that when four years afterwards he brought his business to a close, he was in possession of greater property than this business, considering the deductions which we shall see that it suffered, could have been expected to realize. These computations induce us to surmise that he must have had another source of gain; that the Captain Lane who visited him when the Court-martial on his brother-officers was coming on, did not visit him empty handed, but presented him with some substantial inducement to withdraw from the prosecution. What, indeed, but something of such a nature could have moved him to withdraw from it in so extraordinary, so dishonorable a manner?"

With between four and five hundred pounds a year for tuition, with eighty pounds for his pamphlets, and with probably an additional sum for incidental or casual literary services, and an unknown sum for his translations—for it is not likely that the first three sources of gain should include every penny of the income of a man of

such mental resources as Cobbett—he, by Watson's own showing, could hardly have had an income of much less than five hundred pounds a year. What! he had five hundred pounds a year and saved only a few score pounds? Considering the cheapness of living at that time, and the simplicity and frugality of Cobbett's manner of living, is it not much more likely that he had saved *at least* a hundred and fifty pounds a year? And if in four years he had saved, we will say five hundred pounds, why should he not have been able, without extraneous aid, to pay two hundred and fifty pounds a year for a shop and dwelling-house? Why should he not have been able to pay one year in advance and to stock his shop? It was no doubt his success in money-making that made him venture so largely in his new undertaking. Besides, a bookseller, on setting up a business, does not always pay cash for his stock.

But what is Mr. Watson's authority for this assertion concerning the payment of twelve hundred dollars (two hundred and forty pounds) rent in advance? The letter of a scurrilous ruffian calling himself Paul Hedgehog; a letter containing more mean, low, dirty calumnies and lies to the square inch than perhaps anything that has ever been printed. The author of this vile, venomous attack on Cobbett was the friend and coadjutor, it seems, of Ben Bache (he may have been Ben Bache himself), of the *Aurora* newspaper, in which it appeared, and whose editor was hardly less fertile than his friend in atrocious calumnies on the loyal Englishman. Of Bache we shall learn something more presently. This Paul Hedgehog—who certainly seems, judging from his choice of a name, to have had a correct perception of the class of beings with which he had affinity—accused Cobbett of being an escaped convict, a thief, a runaway, pursued by tipstaffs for “something more than scribbling,” a fugitive felon, a beast, and so on; and yet, with all this, he has “only dis-

closed part of the truth." Just listen to a few sentences, which the reader will excuse me for quoting: "His evil genius pursued him here [in France], and, *as his fingers were as long as ever*, he was obliged as suddenly to leave the Republic, which has now drawn forth all his venom for her attempt *to do him justice*. On his arrival in this country, he figured for some time as a pedagogue; but as this employment scarcely furnished him salt for his porridge,—he having been literally without bread to eat, and not a second shirt to his back,—he resumed his old occupation of scribbling. Having little chance of success in the *other employments* which drove him to this country, his talent at lies and billingsgate rhetoric introduced him to the notice of a certain foreign agent, who was known during the Revolution by the name of *traitor*. This said agent has been known to pay frequent visits to Peter (Porcupine). To atone for his transgressions in the mother country, as well as to get a little more bread to eat than he had been accustomed to, he enlisted in the cause of His Gracious Majesty. From the extreme of poverty and filth, he has suddenly sprouted into at least the appearance of better condition; for he has taken a house for the sale of his large poison at the enormous rent of *twelve hundred dollars a year*, and has *paid a year's rent in advance!*"

This is the man who is Mr. Watson's *authority*. Could there possibly be a worse one? Is any credit to be placed in the assertions of such a monstrous creature? Mr. Watson supposes that Cobbett had about 300 guineas when he set out for France. What a prodigious sum 300 guineas is in an obscure village of France! and at that time, when a guinea could probably pay for a month's board and lodging in the best inn in the place! To show how cheap one may live and learn in some parts of France, the writer of this narrative may be allowed to state that, some twenty years ago, he

lived for one year in a respectable boarding-school in the north of France (Pension Brunois, Saint Quentin), in which one hundred boys received plain board and fair tuition in the main branches of a French education for *five hundred francs* (\$100) *a year*! Is it likely, then, that Cobbett and his wife, both of whom had been accustomed to the most frugal way of living, and both of whom had shown how they could save money; is it likely that they, in 1792, spent *seventy-five hundred francs* (\$1500) in six months, at a time when living was so much cheaper than it is now? Is it not probable, too, that he began to try his hand at teaching his native tongue before he left France? Could such a man as Cobbett remain absolutely idle for six months? But it is useless to make further suppositions in such a case, in which I think I have shown that there is but little foundation for Mr. Watson's ungenerous suspicion, that Cobbett had paid his rent and stocked his shop by means of a bribe received from the men whom he had accused of dishonesty.

When we consider that Cobbett, at the time of the Court-martial, was alone and friendless in the great city of London; that he was newly married, and no doubt desirous of enjoying the agreeable society of his wife in peace and quietness; that he probably listened to the entreaties of that wife to abstain from proceedings that caused so much annoyance and uneasiness, and the result of which seemed so doubtful and dangerous; when we consider the rank and influential connections of those whom he was to prosecute, and that he found himself single-handed and almost powerless in his accusations against them, not being able to procure the discharge from the army of even one single man as a witness; when we consider the number of difficulties and obstacles that surrounded him, and the black and ominous signs that presented themselves before him, in case he persisted in his design, and failed to convict the accused parties, is it surprising that

he should have acted as he did? Who would not have had serious apprehensions, and perhaps an eye toward retreat, under such ominous circumstances? It was perhaps an error; he should have stood his ground; but I think it unfair to suppose him bribed because he did not.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### THE MEETING OF COBBETT AND TALLEYRAND.

AMONG the celebrities with whom Cobbett came in contact in America was the famous Talleyrand, who was at that time living as a kind of refugee, or, as Cobbett thought, a spy, in the United States. He had been ordered out of England (1794), whither he had escaped at the beginning of the reign of terror, and had now taken refuge in the United States. Here he naturally, though it appears unauthoritatively, exerted himself to serve his country by enlisting the sympathy of Americans on the side of France. He was known to be on intimate terms with Jefferson, the head of the French faction, and he maintained close relations with Adet, the French minister. So he and Cobbett came together. Never, perhaps, did two men more dissimilar in character meet at the same fireside: the blunt, fearless, outspoken Englishman, and the wary, cautious, politic Frenchman. Talleyrand wished to gain Cobbett over to the French party, and no doubt imagined he could do this as easily with the Englishman as he had, in his time, gained over many a Frenchman to his views. In Cobbett's account of this interview, he displays, in his usual unreserved style, all his dislike and distrust of the astute political wire-puller:

“That the apostate Talleyrand was a spy in this country is evident from his being afterward received with open arms by the very men who had proscribed him. But

I have a word or two to say about this bishop. First, he set up as a *merchant and dealer* at New York, which he continued till he had acquired what knowledge he thought was to be come at among persons engaged in mercantile affairs; then he assumed the character of a *gentleman*, at the same time removing to Philadelphia, where he got access to persons of the first rank, with all those who were connected with, or in the confidence of, the government. Some months after his arrival in this city, he left a message with a friend of his, requesting me to meet him at that friend's house. Several days passed before the meeting took place. I had no business to call me that way, and therefore did not go. At last this modern Judas and I got seated by the same fireside. I expected that he wanted to expostulate with me on the severe treatment he had met at my hands: I had called him an apostate, a hypocrite, and every other name of which he was deserving. I therefore leave the reader to imagine my astonishment, when I heard him begin by complimenting me on my wit and learning. He praised several of my pamphlets, the 'New Year's Gift' in particular, and still spoke of them as mine. I did not acknowledge myself the author, of course; but yet he would insist that I was; and, at any rate, they reflected, he said, *infinite honor* on the author, let him be who he might. Having carried this species of flattery as far as he judged it safe, he asked me, with a vast deal of apparent seriousness, whether I had received my education at *Oxford* or at *Cambridge*! Hitherto I had kept my countenance pretty well; but this abominable stretch of hypocrisy, and the placid manner and silver accent with which it was pronounced, would have forced a laugh from a Quaker in the midst of a meeting. I don't recollect what reply I made him; but this I recollect well, I gave him to understand I was no trout, and consequently was not to be caught by tickling.

“This information led him to something more solid. He began to talk about *business*. I was no flour merchant, but I taught English; and, as luck would have it, this was the very commodity that Bishop Perigord wanted. . . . He knew the English language as well as I did, but he wanted to have dealings with me in some way or other.

“I knew that notwithstanding his being proscribed at Paris, he was extremely intimate with Adet; and this circumstance led me to suspect his real business in the United States. I therefore did not care to take him as a scholar. I told him that, being engaged in a translation for the press, I could not possibly quit home. He would very gladly come to my house. I cannot say but what it would have been a great satisfaction to me to have seen the *ci-divant* Bishop of Autun, the guardian of the holy oil that anointed the heads of the descendants of St. Louis, come trudging through the dirt to receive a lesson from me; but, on the other hand, I did not want a Frenchman to take a survey either of my desk or my house. My price for teaching was six dollars a month; he offered me *twenty*; but I refused; and before I left him I gave him clearly to understand that I was not to be purchased.”

Would not this Molièrean scene, the meeting of Cobbett and Talleyrand, make a capital subject for a painter?

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## CHAPTER XII.

### EDITORIAL WARFARE.—A MILD CORRESPONDENT.

As a specimen of the attacks which were made on Cobbett, and of the manner in which he replied to those attacks, the following paragraphs will serve. The first is from the *Aurora*—a paper published in the interest of the French faction and edited by Benjamin Bache, a grandson of Benjamin Franklin:

“In conversation, a few days ago, the British corporal declared that he never would forgive the Americans for their rebellion against their king, and that he never would rest until they were reduced to their former obedience. If the fellow, whose *back still exhibits the marks of his former virtue*, should dare to deny this, it can be substantiated by undoubted evidence. After this speech, it may be well to repeat that Peter Porcupine is the champion of the Federalists.”

“Now, pray sir,” retorts Cobbett, addressing the editor of the *Aurora*, “is this of your own manufacture, or is it really from a correspondent? If you own it for yours, I assert that you are a liar and an infamous scoundrel; if you do not, your correspondent has my free leave to take those appellations to himself. . . . I tell you, Mr. Bache, you will get nothing by me in a war of words; so you may as well abandon the contest while you can do it with a good grace. I do not wish—and I call on the public to remember what I say—I do not wish to fill my paper with personal satire and abuse; but I will not be insulted with impunity, and particularly by you. I have not forgotten your pointing out the propriety of describing my person, and hinting at the same time the dark purpose of so doing. . . . But it is useless, my dear Bache, to say anything more about the matter. Why should we keep buffetting and sparring at each other? Why should we rend and tear our poor reputations to pieces, merely for the diversion of the spectators? A great number of persons, rather lovers of fun than of decency, have already pitted us, and are prepared to enjoy the combat. Let us disappoint them. Let us walk about arm in arm. . . . Your pride may indeed reject the society of a British corporal, as you very justly style me; but, my dear sir, we are now both of the same honest calling. Nobody looks upon you as the grandson of a philosopher or ambassador. People call you—they do indeed—‘Ben Bache, the news-



man,'—nothing more, I assure you, and as they have no regard for your illustrious descent, so you may be sure they will not long remember the meanness of mine."

Strong language seems to have been the order of the day among the politicians of that age. If Dr. Johnson, who loved a good hater, could have read the Philadelphia papers at this time, he would have been thoroughly gratified. The following anonymous letter, addressed to Cobbett, will serve as a pretty good specimen of the kind of haters by whom he was surrounded:

"Porcupine—You infernal ruffian, it is my full intention, when or wherever I meet you, to give you one of the greatest lambastings you ever got. My reason for doing so, you vagabond, is for writing and speaking in such a disgraceful manner as you do against the *greatest* and *chief heads* of our city. How dare you, you corporal, or any other British subject or slave, have the impudence to speak to a free man? I think it too great an honor conferred on you to be permitted to tread on this *blessed ground*, for fear of contaminating it as you have in a great measure done already by your hell-fire paper, and the blackguard scurrilous pieces it contains. Believe me, you infernal ruffian, it is my full intention to give you a damned whipping when I meet you. When you publish this, take care of the streets and alleys you walk in."

"This is to inform this infamously *free man*," remarked Cobbett on printing this gentle epistle, "that I know he is a base scoundrel, and that he no more dares attack me than he dares go to any country where there is a gallows."

Mr. Watson tells the following story of a personal encounter between Cobbett and Bache, which, he says, is the only occasion, as far as he has discovered, on which Cobbett exercised personal violence against an enemy.

"One day, as Bache was coming out of the Cross Keys, the great democratic place of assembly, he met Cobbett

face to face. 'Sir,' said he, with a scowl, 'your name is William Cobbett.' Cobbett admitted the charge. 'Then I tell you, William Cobbett,' he continued, 'that you are a—are a—a very great—yes; William Cobbett, you know me; my name is Bache, and you have thought proper in your villainous paper to hold me up to public ridicule and contempt!' 'Indeed,' rejoined Cobbett, 'I always pay every one his due; but if the creature be greatly beneath my notice, I generally give him a thrashing.' He was proceeding to say something more, when he was interrupted by Bache, saying, 'You are a pest! You are a nuisance! You are a disgrace to the country that gave you a shelter when you could not find one in the country that gave you birth, and which cast you out of it, as it would a poisonous serpent!' This was more than Cobbett could bear, and saying, 'You shall find out that the serpent can sting!' he stretched the editor of the *Aurora* prostrate in the kennel, in the sight of a number of bystanders, who had stopped to witness the squabble between 'the newspaper men,' as they styled them."

But it is in his history of Peter Porcupine that he gives Ben Bache, through his much-admired and illustrious ancestor, the most tremendous hit that can be conceived, equal, I think, to anything in Swift: "Every one will, I hope, have the goodness to believe that *my* grandfather was no philosopher. Indeed he was not. He never made a lightning-rod, nor bottled up a single quart of sunshine, in the whole course of his life; he was no almanac-maker, nor quack, nor chimney-doctor, nor soap-boiler, nor ambassador, nor printer's devil; neither was he a deist; and all his children were born in wedlock. The legacies he left were his scythe, his reaping-hook, and his flail; he bequeathed no old and irrevocable debts to a hospital; he never cheated the poor during his life; nor mocked them at his death. He has, it is true, been suffered to sleep quietly beneath the green sward; but if

his descendants cannot point to his statue over the door of a library, they have not the mortification of hearing him spoken of as a libertine, a hypocrite, and an infidel."

If Americans were all Roman Catholics, and Franklin were one of their saints, I would not dare to cite this passage; but I imagine the philosopher and patriot has such an assured position in the hearts of his countrymen, that they will only smile at this audacious comparison of grandfathers!

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### LEGAL TROUBLES.—RETURN TO ENGLAND.

Two libel suits were now brought against Cobbett, in the first of which he was acquitted, notwithstanding a strong effort on the part of his enemies to convict him; in the second he was found guilty, condemned to pay a heavy fine, and altogether treated so unfairly, that it was ultimately the means of driving him from the country.

The first was a suit brought against him by the Spanish minister, on account of certain strictures in Cobbett's paper, the *Gazette*, on his master the King of Spain, whom Cobbett stigmatized as a puppet in the hands of the five despots of Paris. Though the Judge, Chief-Justice McKean, a bitter, unrelenting enemy of Cobbett's summed up, in his charge, strongly against him, the jury brought in a verdict of acquittal, yet only by a majority of one; for in a jury consisting of nineteen, ten were for acquittal and nine against it. Judge McKean subsequently annoyed and hampered Cobbett by collecting a number of his writings, which he called libels against himself, Jefferson, Dallas, Franklin, and others, and compelling him, on his own authority, as Chief-Jus-

tice, to go under bonds to keep the peace and be of good behavior.

The second suit was of a different nature. In 1793 the yellow fever broke out in Philadelphia, and carried off 4,000 of its 60,000 inhabitants. In 1797 it broke out again, though it was not so violent as it was in 1793. Among the best known medical practitioners of the day was Dr. Benjamin Rush, well known as a politician as well as physician. Dr. Rush had been a member of the Continental Congress, and was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. This circumstance alone entitles his name to reverence; but, as a practitioner of physic, he does not seem to have been above criticism. Having largely acquired the confidence of the people by his pleasant manners and liberality toward the poor, he had an immense practice, sometimes prescribing for as many as a hundred patients in a day. He had invented or discovered a new cure for yellow fever, which consisted of bleeding and purging the patient and giving him large doses of mercury. According to Cobbett, this bleeding sometimes amounted to one hundred and fifty ounces, and the purges contained as much as sixty grains of mercury and ninety grains of jalap. This remarkable cure Dr. Rush named the "Samson of medicine," and declared that with this cure there was no more danger to be apprehended from yellow fever than from the measles or a common cold. Cobbett, in his *Gazette*, observed that it was justly compared to Samson, for he believed that Rush and his partisans had slain more Americans with it than Samson slew of the Philistines, the Israelite having slain his thousands, but the Rushites having slain their tens of thousands. He compared the author of it to Gil Blas's patron, Sangrado, with his hot water and blood-letting cure; proclaimed Dr. Rush a quack, and declared that when he saw him getting ready to revive the horrors of 1793, both his interest and his duty commanded him

to endeavor to avert them. Cobbett was not alone in his unfavorable opinion of Rush's remedies; the editor of the *United States Gazette* also condemned them, and various physicians made use of Cobbett's newspaper to protest against them. Among others, Dr. Currie, a member of the College of Physicians, declared that "the mode of treatment advised by Dr. Rush cannot, in the yellow fever, fail of being *certain death*."

The doctor brought a suit for libel against Cobbett, which, after repeated postponements, lasting over two years—in order, as Cobbett said, to get a jury that suited the doctor and his friend McKean—was tried before a court of law presided over by Judge Shippen, the minion of Cobbett's personal and political enemy, Judge McKean. Judge Shippen pronounced a very partial and unfair charge to the jury. The result was that the jury brought in a verdict against Cobbett of \$5000 damages, which sum was immediately raised and paid by his friends in the United States and Canada, who, no doubt, rightly considered the verdict as having been secured more by political than judicial arguments. His great enemy, Judge McKean, was shortly afterward elected Governor of Pennsylvania, and Cobbett, having rashly declared that in the event of such a result he would retire entirely from the State, was as good as his word, and immediately moved to New York. Here he renewed his bookselling business and continued to publish his *Gazette*; but finding himself among entire strangers, and separated from the friends he had made in Philadelphia, he felt that his position was an isolated, and, as a Royalist, somewhat anomalous one, so he began to cast his eyes toward England as the country where his talents would be better appreciated and his life rendered more comfortable than in America. After writing and publishing a pamphlet entitled "The Rushlight," exposing the whole Rush affair, and after publishing in the Philadelphia papers a fare-

well address to the Americans—in which he declared that though no man had so many and such malignant foes, few ever had more sincere and faithful friends—he set sail for England, on the 1st of June, 1800.

“When I began my opposition to French principles and French influence in America,” he wrote in 1801, in a letter addressed to Lord Hawkesbury, “even my countrymen called on me to desist, telling me that I stood *alone*; but I stood long enough to find myself in a majority. I stood long enough to hear *ça ira* exchanged for *God save the King*. I stood long enough to see the people of Philadelphia—who had threatened to murder me because I openly exhibited at my window a picture of Lord Howe’s victory over the French—I stood long enough to see these very people make a public celebration of Lord Nelson’s victory of the Nile. Nay, my lord, I stood long enough to see the time when I was the only writer in the country who dared to stand forward in behalf of a body of injured and unfortunate Frenchmen, who finally owed to me alone their deliverance from ruin and perhaps from death.” “From the summer of 1794 to the year 1800,” he says in his first letter to Mr. Pitt, “there were published from my pen about twenty different pamphlets, the whole number of the impressions of which amounted to more than *half a million of copies*. During the three last years a daily paper, surpassing in extent of numbers any one ever known in America, was the vehicle of my efforts; and, in the year 1800, I might safely have asserted that there was not, in the whole country, one single family in which some part or other of my writings had not been read, and in which, generally speaking, they had not produced some degree of effect favorable to the interests of my country.”

## PART II.

### FROM COBBETT'S RETURN TO ENGLAND TILL HIS RELEASE FROM NEWGATE.

#### CHAPTER I.

##### WHY COBBETT ACTED AS HE DID IN AMERICA.—RECEPTION BY THE HON. MR. WINDHAM.

COBBETT now once more set foot on his native land, that land whose king and whose government he had so bravely defended for eight years, single handed, against all the democracy of America, and whose government he had held up as an example to all the world. Did he find everything as lovely as he had anticipated? Was everything in that government as excellent as he had proclaimed it to be? Unhappily the date of Cobbett's return was unfortunate; for the years in which he lived in England, the first thirty-five years of this century, were among the darkest in the history of that country. The government was not simply unprogressive, but retrogressive; liberal ideas were dreaded as revolutionary, and consequently ruinous; everybody sighed for "the good old times," and the people endured perhaps more misery and misgovernment than in any other period of their history.

Some recollection of the Court-martial affair, not yet entirely effaced, might indeed still have haunted his mind, and prepared him to find a state of things not entirely perfect. Indeed, one might ask, how came he, after such a near view of the corruptions of that government, how came he to think so much of it, to become such a

zealous defender of it? He came to it gradually; by discussions with his scholars and others; by seeing many of the imperfections of the American system; by his innate love of his native country; for we have seen that he came here with republican sympathies and a desire to serve the Republic. In a foreign country, among those who were constantly reviling the land of his birth and its rulers, his love of that land revived, rose, increased, and possessed him to such a degree that it blinded him to all her faults and imperfections, and caused him to exclaim with Cowper:

“England, with all thy faults, I love thee still,  
My country!”

“What, for instance,” he says, in his third letter to Mr. Pitt, “induced me, when so far from my country, voluntarily to devote myself to her cause? Her commerce? I neither knew nor cared anything about it. Her funds? I was so happy as hardly to understand the meaning of the word. Her lands? I could, alas! lay claim to nothing but the graves of my parents. What, then, was the stimulus? What was I proud of? It was the name and fame of England. Her laws, her liberties, her justice, her might; all the qualities and circumstances that had given her renown in the world; but, above all, her deeds in arms, her military glory.”

“When I began writing in America,” he says in his New Year’s Gift to Old George Rose, “the country raged with attacks on Pitt and on England. I was an Englishman, and following that impulse which was so natural to my spirit and my age, under such circumstances, I took the part of my country, without knowing much, and indeed without caring much, about the grounds of her war against the people of France. I had read little at the age of twenty-eight, and I had no experience in such matters. . . . I knew that I was an Englishman, and



hearing my country attacked, I became her defender through thick and thin, always confounding *the government* of my country with *my country itself*." These, therefore, were natural feelings, for which no right-feeling American can blame him.

Among the friends and admirers in England whom Cobbett had gained by his writings in America, was the well-known statesman, the Right Honorable William Windham, minister in the Pitt and Grenville administrations, a gentleman of such noble character that Macaulay speaks of him as "the ingenious, the chivalrous, the high-souled Windham." This gentleman gave Cobbett a very cordial reception, and at a dinner given in his honor presented him to William Pitt, the celebrated prime minister, whose policy Cobbett had so steadily and vigorously defended while in America.

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE PITT DINNER-PARTY.

As much has been written about this dinner; as it has been questioned by several writers whether Pitt was really present at it; as it has been asserted that Pitt was too haughty to meet Windham's peasant *protégé* on such familiar terms; and as Cobbett's subsequent opinions of and conduct toward Pitt have been attributed to that minister's refusal to meet him at that dinner-party, I must first quote the various passages in which Cobbett himself speaks of it and of what occurred there, before showing that there was no reason whatever for the suspicion which has been cast on Cobbett's statements regarding it, and that we have now positive proof of the correctness of those statements.

In his letter to the people of Hampshire, written in 1809, concerning the Court-martial affair, he says :

“On my return from America, having stopped at Halifax in Nova Scotia, the Duke of Kent, who requested to see me, talked to me about my regiment and about all its affairs. He must have known all about the Court-martial. Mr. Windham and Mr. Yorke have been, since my return, and the former was before, *Secretaries at War*; they had the whole history in their office; and yet nobody in the country has ever *spoken*, and, I believe, *thought* better of me than Mr. Windham and Mr. Yorke have. I remember that in dining with Mr. Pitt at Mr. Windham’s in August, 1800, the former asked me about Lord Edward Fitzgerald. We talked about him a good deal. I gave the company present (of which Mr. Canning was one) an account of his conduct while in the regiment; I spoke in very high terms of his zeal for the service, and I told Mr. Pitt that Lord Edward was the only sober and the only *honest* officer I had ever known in the army.\* I did

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\* Of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, who procured Cobbett’s discharge from the army, and whom he cited as one of his witnesses in the Court-martial affair, Mr. Thomas Moore, the poet, has written a *Life*. Although it is little more than a collection of the young nobleman’s letters, and some of those of his kinsfolk, with a few introductory remarks by the biographer, the book is very interesting. Fitzgerald was a nobleman by nature as well as by rank—one of the most gentle-hearted men that ever breathed. Procuring at seventeen years of age a lieutenancy in the army (1781), he went with his regiment to America, and after a little active service under Lord Rawdon in South Carolina, where he was wounded in a skirmish with the Americans, he was sent home at the conclusion of peace, 1782. After studying for some time at Woolwich, and then travelling in Spain and Portugal, he rejoined his regiment at St. John, N. B., whence he wrote highly interesting letters home to his mother and others, and where he seems to have first imbibed republican principles. He had previously taken his seat in the Irish Parliament as the nominee of his uncle, the Duke of Leinster, and on his return to England in

this for the express purpose of leading him on to talk about the Court-martial—but it was avoided. In fact, they all knew that what I had complained of was true, and that I had been baffled in my attempt to obtain justice, only because I had neither money nor friends.”

In his second letter to the people of Hampshire, written in the same year, this passage occurs: “Upon my return from America, their offers [of support from the government] were renewed, but again rejected. I received marks of approbation for these writings from all the men then in power. I dined at Mr. Windham’s with Pitt, which I then thought a very great honor; and really, when Mr. Canning looks back to the time when I dined at his house in Putney, and when he paid me so many just compliments for my exertions in my country’s cause, I can hardly think that he must not view with some degree of shame these attempts [to defame him] on the part of persons who are publicly paid to write under his particular patronage.”

While answering the assertions of his enemies “that the government did not receive and reward him agreeably to his deserts, and that *therefore* he turned against it,” he says, in his letter entitled, *A New Year’s Gift to Old George Rose*, written in 1817: “You, George, know this to be false. The facts were these: Very soon after my

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1791 was about to be entrusted by Pitt with the command of an expedition against Cadiz, when he found that his uncle had, in his absence, again procured him a seat in the Irish Parliament, so that he was obliged to decline Pitt’s offer and stand by his uncle. In Parliament he sided with the liberal members, and endeavored to procure a reform of abuses in Ireland; but, failing in all attempts at reform, he was induced to join the revolutionary organization called the United Brotherhood of Ireland, who made him their military leader. After having nearly succeeded in getting everything ready for beginning the rebellion by the capture of Dublin, he was betrayed by some of his accomplices, wounded by his captors, and died of his wounds in a dungeon, 1798.

arrival I was invited to dine at Mr. Windham's, who was then Secretary at War, and did dine in company of Pitt, who was very polite to me, and whose manners I very much admired. At this dinner, besides the brave and honest (though misguided) host, were Mr. Canning, Mr. Frere, Mr. George Ellis, and some others, whom I do not now recollect. I was never presumptuous in my life, and I regarded this as a great act of condescension on the part of Mr. Windham, and more especially on the part of Mr. Pitt, of whose talents and integrity I had then the highest possible opinion; for I, at that time, had no idea of such things as Bank bubbles and Lord Melville's accounts."

The next reference to this dinner-party is in his "Year's Residence in America," under date of January 15, 1819. The passage is so strikingly interesting and such a delightful bit of autobiography, that the reader will excuse me for giving it entire: "The question put to me eagerly by everyone in Philadelphia is, 'Don't you think the city greatly improved?' They seem to me to confound *augmentation* with *improvement*. It always was a fine city, since I first knew it; and it is very greatly augmented. It has, I believe, nearly doubled its extent and number of houses since the year 1799. But, after being for so long a time familiar with London, every other place appears little. After being within a few hundred yards of Westminster Hall and the Abbey Church, and the Bridge, and looking from my own windows into St. James's Park, all other buildings and spots appear mean and insignificant. I went to-day to see the house I formerly occupied [in Philadelphia]. How small! It is always thus: the words *large* and *small* are carried about with us in our minds, and we forget real dimensions. The idea, *such as it was received*, remains during our absence from the object. When I returned to England in 1800, after an absence from the country parts of six-

teen years,\* the trees, the hedges, even the parks and woods, seemed so small! It made me laugh to hear little gutters that I could jump over called *rivers*. The Thames was but a creek! But when, about a month after my arrival in London, I went to Farnham, the place of my birth, what was my surprise! Everything was become so pitifully small! I had to cross, in my post-chaise, the long and dreary heath of Bagshot; then, at the end of it, to mount a hill called Hungry Hill; and from that hill I knew I should look down into the beautiful and fertile vale of Farnham. My heart fluttered with impatience, mixed with a sort of fear, to see all the scenes of my childhood; for I had learnt before of the death of my father and mother. There is a hill, not far from the town, called Crooksbury Hill, which rises up out of a flat, in the form of a cone, and is planted with Scotch fir-trees. Here I used to take the eggs and young ones of crows and magpies. This hill was a famous object in the neighborhood. It served as the superlative degree of height. 'As high as Crooksbury Hill' meant with us the utmost degree of height. Therefore, the first object my eyes sought was this hill. I could not believe my eyes! Literally speaking, I for a moment thought the famous hill removed, and a little heap put in its stead; for I had seen in New Brunswick a single rock, or hill of solid rock,

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\* Which disposes of a long story of Huish's, quoted by Watson, that when Cobbett left London, just before the meeting of the Court-martial, he went to his father's house at Farnham; and that the accused officers, desirous of prosecuting him on hearing of his whereabouts, sent an old soldier, disguised as a beggar, after him, and that he found him here; but that Cobbett, recognizing the soldier, and accusing him of desertion from the army, thus found time to escape to France. Where do these fictions originate? Furthermore, if this house in Philadelphia, in which he once resided, was comparatively so small, is it likely that Paul Hedgehog's story is true, that Cobbett paid a rent of \$1200 a year for it?

ten times as big, and four or five times as high. The post-boy, going down the hill, and not a bad road, whisked me in a few minutes to the Bush Inn, from the garden of which I could see the prodigious sand-hill where I had begun my gardening works. What a nothing! But now came rushing into my mind, all at once, my pretty little garden, my little blue smock-frock, my little nailed shoes, my pretty pigeons that I used to feed out of my hands, the last kind words and tears of my gentle and tender-hearted and affectionate mother! I hastened back into the room. If I had looked a moment longer I should have dropped. When I came to reflect, what a change! What scenes I had gone through! How altered my state! I had dined the day before at the Secretary of State's, in company with Mr. Pitt, and had been waited upon by men in gaudy liveries! I had nobody to assist me in the world; no teacher of any sort. Nobody to shelter me from the consequences of bad, and no one to counsel me to good behavior. I felt proud. The distinctions of rank, birth, and wealth, all became nothing in my eyes; and from that moment (less than a month after my arrival in England), I resolved never to bend before them."

There is another incident which Cobbett's sons say they have heard their father mention as having taken place at this dinner-party. When the excitement in this country about the proposed Jay treaty was at its height, England being then at war with France, a French vessel, bearing dispatches from the French minister at Philadelphia, was captured in the English Channel; and the French captain, seeing that all was lost, seized his dispatches and threw them into the sea. This was observed by the captain of the English vessel, and he immediately leaped into the sea and rescued them. These dispatches revealed the treachery of Randolph, Washington's Secretary of State, toward his own government, and were sent by the British government to the President of the United States. The

discovery put a powerful weapon into the hands of the friends of the treaty, which was effectively used by Cobbett in his "New Year's Gift to the Democrats," which greatly aided in securing the ratification of the treaty. On Cobbett suggesting to Mr. Pitt the propriety of doing something for the officer who had rendered such important service in saving the dispatches, "he turned round to Mr. Windham," said Cobbett, "and inquired if that man had received no reward."

Now, after carefully reading all these passages, written in different years and in different places, with their circumstantial details of time and place and persons, with such a clear statement of the various subjects talked of; after carefully considering all these passages, will any one deny that they bear the impress of truth on the face of them? It is a remarkable fact that there seems never to have been any doubt expressed, *during Cobbett's lifetime*, as to the correctness of these statements. Cobbett's books, pamphlets, and periodicals were read by tens of thousands; indeed, his Register, in which two of these passages appeared, was one of the most widely read and most sharply criticised papers in England; yet nobody seems to have doubted his statements at the time he wrote and published them. And he mentions living witnesses. Canning, who lived until 1827, and who would have been only too glad, at the time these statements were made, to have found such a good opportunity to destroy his influence by denying his veracity, never attempted anything of the kind. Messrs. Ellis and Frere are well-known personages; both friends of Canning, and, like Canning himself, both contributors to newspapers. The latter is the Right Hon. John Hookham Frere, scholar, humorist, and diplomatist, Canning's school-fellow and fellow-contributor to the celebrated newspaper, the *Anti-Jacobin*. Mr. Frere lived till 1846; and surely, if there were no truth in the various statements of Cob-

bett's concerning the meeting with Mr. Pitt, he would be likely to have said so. The former is George Ellis, F.R.S., F.S.A., author of "Specimens of Early English Poetry," and "Specimens of Early English Romance;" also a friend of Canning and Frere, and a contributor to the *Anti-Jacobin*.

Further, there intervened nearly *four years* between the date of this dinner and Cobbett's falling off from Pitt. Is it probable that Cobbett would have gone on supporting and defending Pitt for *four years*, after that gentleman showed such small esteem for him as to refuse to dine in his company? Cobbett was by no means such a long-suffering, patient, and meek individual.

Mr. Watson says: "Cobbett's sons are surely justified in considering these as sufficient testimonies that Pitt was not too haughty to meet their father at Windham's table. Yet it is the duty of the biographer to remark that *there is no attestation to the fact of the meeting but Cobbett's own.*" This observation, so smooth and impartial-looking, is a deadly thrust at the character of Cobbett; it cuts away by the roots all confidence in him; for it implies that *his* word, *his* attestation is of no value. And yet there *is* an attestation, an unimpeachable attestation, besides Cobbett's own, to the fact of the meeting with Pitt on the occasion in question; and that is the record of no less a personage than Mr. Windham himself. In that gentleman's diary, under date August 7, 1800, there appears the following entry: "Council dinner: Hammond, Canning, Frere, Malone, Cobbett, alias 'Peter Porcupine,' whom I saw for the first time; Pitt, and George Ellis; Canning's cousin."\*

What a fortunate thing it is that Mr. Windham kept a diary! Let no man condemn diaries any more, for they are often eminently useful.

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\*Diary of the Hon. William Windham (Longmans, 1866), p. 430. Quoted by Mr. E. Smith.



So firmly rooted did this falsehood become about Pitt refusing to meet Cobbett at the dinner-party, that not only Mr. Watson, but nearly all his other biographers, nearly all the encyclopedia and magazine writers, make the same statement, and suppose that Cobbett fell away from Pitt because the latter refused to meet him on this occasion! It is such a convenient and easy explanation of his conduct! Mr. Watson's insinuation is so peculiarly insidious and subtle, that it pierces like a poniard-thrust; stabs Cobbett through and through; kills at one blow. However, the reader will not, after this, I trust, be surprised at any attempt this writer makes to injure his character.

And here I must dispose of another accusation of this sort, previously mentioned. On no better grounds, do Mr. Watson and a previous biographer of Cobbett's, Mr. Huish, throw doubt on the genuineness of Jefferson's letter to Cobbett, in answer to his letter of recommendation from Mr. Adams. They profess incredulity in his having received any letter of recommendation from Mr. Adams, Ambassador at the Hague, because Cobbett had never, as they say, been at the Hague, and did not explain how he came to receive this letter from Mr. Adams. Cobbett says he was recommended to Mr. Adams by a Mr. Short, and it seems from Jefferson's letter to Cobbett, that he was well acquainted with Mr. Short.\* Mr. Watson sums the matter up by saying, "So the matter must rest; there being no proof of the letter to Jefferson having existed, or the letter from Jefferson being genuine, but Cobbett's own assertion."

To have concocted this story of the letter of recommendation from Mr. Adams, and forged the reply of Mr.

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\* This is, no doubt, the Mr. Wm. Short that figures in Jefferson's writings as one of his correspondents. Jefferson's "Writings," vii., p. 390.

Jefferson, and to have published both the story and the letter of recommendation, in the very city in which resided Jefferson himself, the chief of the party against which Cobbett was so notoriously fighting, and in which both Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Adams had so many friends and acquaintances,—to have done this without being found out, there and then, seems not only improbable, but impossible. Besides, it argues a degree of folly, as well as of villainy, on the part of Cobbett, of which nothing in his career justifies us in believing him guilty; on the contrary, his whole life forbids us to suppose him capable of such contemptible baseness. If these biographers had shown that Mr. Adams or Mr. Jefferson, or any of their friends, had denied the genuineness of these letters, it would have settled the matter; there would be nothing more to be said about it; but to insinuate, many years after Cobbett's death, because he did not explain, like a man under cross-examination, how he came by a certain letter, that its authenticity is doubtful, is, in my opinion, exceedingly mean and unfair dealing. But it is of a piece with the rest of Mr. Watson's assertions.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### HOW THE SCALES WERE TAKEN FROM HIS EYES.

HERE is the whole story, of what he found on his return to England, and of how he became acquainted with the real inwardness of things—a perfectly “round unvarnished tale,” told by Cobbett many years afterwards; illustrating, in a graphic manner, not only Cobbett's thoroughly independent and honorable conduct, but the peculiarly rotten state of affairs under the Pitt administration:

“At the time of my return, the great government writ-

ers and political agents were John Reeves, who had been chairman of the *Loyal Association against Republicans and Levellers*; John Bowles; John Gifford; William Gifford; Sir Frederick Morton Eden, Bart.; the Reverend Mr. Ireland, now Dean of Westminster; the Reverend John Brand; the Reverend Herbert Marsh, now Bishop of Peterborough; Mallet du Pau; Sir Francis d'Ivernois; and Nicholas Vansittart. These men were all pamphlet-writers, supporting Pitt and the war through thick and thin. They, looking upon me as a fellow-laborer, had all sent their pamphlets to me at Philadelphia; and all of them, except Marsh, Vansittart, and the two Frenchmen, had written to me laudatory letters. All but the parsons called themselves 'SQUIRES on the title-pages of their pamphlets. Look at me now! I had been bred up with a smock-frock upon my back; that frock I had exchanged for a soldier's coat; I had been out of England almost the whole of my time from the age of twenty. We used to give in those times the name of 'SQUIRE to none but gentlemen of great landed estates, keeping their carriages, hounds, and so forth; look at me, then, in whose mind my boyish idea of a 'SQUIRE had been carried about the world with me; look at me, I say, with letters from four 'SQUIRES and four REVERENDS on my table; and wonder not that my head was half turned! Only think of me (who, only about twelve years before, was clumping about with hob-nailed shoes on my feet, and with a smock-frock on my back), being in literary correspondence with four 'SQUIRES, two REVERENDS, and a BARONET! Look at me, and wonder that I did not lose my senses! And if I had remained in America, God knows what might have happened.

"Luckily, I came to England, and that steadied my head pretty quickly. To my utter astonishment and confusion, I found all my 'Squires and Reverends, and my Baronet, too, all, in one way or another, dependent on

the government, and, *out of the public purse, profiting from their pamphlets!* John Reeves, ESQUIRE, who was a barrister, but never practiced, I found *joint patentee of the office of King's Printer*—a sinecure, worth, to him, about £4,000 a year, which he had got for thirty years, just then begun. John Bowles, ESQUIRE, also a briefless barrister, I found a *Commissioner of Dutch Property*. The public will recollect the emoluments of that office, as exposed in 1809. John Gifford, ESQUIRE, I found a *Police Magistrate*, with a pension of £300 a year besides. William Gifford, ESQUIRE, I found sharing the profit of Canning's Anti-Jacobin newspaper (set up and paid for by the Treasury), and with a sinecure of £329 a year besides. My BARONET I found with rent-free apartments in Hampton Court Palace, and with what else I have forgotten. My REVEREND John Brand I found with the living of St. George, Southwark, given him by Lord Loughborough (then Chancellor), he having already a living in Suffolk. My REVEREND Ireland I found with the living of Croydon, or the expectancy of it, and also found that he was *looking steadily at old Lord Liverpool*. The REVEREND Herbert Marsh I found a pension-hunter, and he soon succeeded to the tune of £514 a year. Mallett du Pau I found dead; but I found that he had been a PENSIONER, and I found his widow a pensioner, and his son in one of the public offices. And Nicholas Vansittart, ESQUIRE, who had written a pamphlet to prove that the war had enriched the nation, I found, O God! a *Commissioner of Scotch Herrings!* Hey, dear! as the Lancashire men say, I thought it would break my heart!

“Of all these men, John Reeves and William Gifford were the only ones of talent; the former a really learned lawyer, and, politics aside, as good a man as ever lived—a clever man; a head as clear as spring-water; considerate, mild, humane; made by nature to be an English judge. I did not break with him on account of politics. We said

nothing about them for years. I always had the greatest regard for him; and there he now is in the grave, leaving, the newspapers say, *two hundred thousand pounds*, without hardly a soul knowing there ever was such a man! The fate of William Gifford was much about the same: both lived and died bachelors; both left large sums of money; both spent their lives in upholding measures which, in their hearts, they abhorred, and in eulogizing men whom, in their hearts, they despised; and, in spite of their literary labors, the only chance that they have of being remembered, for even ten years to come, is this notice of them from a pen that they both most anxiously wished to silence many years ago. Among the first things that Reeves ever said to me was: ‘I tell you what, Cobbett, we have only two ways here; we must either *kiss*—or kick them: and you must make your choice at once!’ I resolved to kick.

“William Gifford had more asperity in his temper, and was less resigned. He despised Pitt and Canning, and the whole crew; but he loved ease, was timid; he was their slave all his life, and all his life had to endure a conflict between his pecuniary interest and his conscience.

“As to the rest of my ‘SQUIRES and other dignified pamphleteers, they were a low, talentless, place-and-pension-hunting crew; and I was so disgusted with the discoveries I had made, that I trembled at the thought of falling into the ranks with them. Love of *ease* was not in me; the very idea of becoming *rich* had never entered my mind; and my horror at the thought of selling my talents for money, and of plundering the country with the help of the means that God had given me wherewith to assist in supporting its character, filled me with horror not to be expressed.”

Perhaps they have “changed all that” in England by this time; but, unhappily, this state of things is common enough here now. We have fallen upon evil days here in

America. What young American who has supported the government by tongue or pen during a campaign or an administration would refuse to be rewarded by a good fat office, if offered to him? We have, in this country, come to look upon this thing as something legitimate; it is the chief thing many people aim at, nowadays, when they write on political matters; yet such a reward is, nevertheless, nothing but unqualified corruption. One should no more be rewarded for doing his duty, for aiding his country by tongue or pen, than he should be rewarded for telling the truth; and a political party, in whose principles and policy one believes, should be defended or supported without hope of reward. One must write for measures, not money; for principles, not pay. Let every young American, therefore, take this to heart, and beware of allowing himself to be bought by a pocketful of Uncle Sam's silver and gold. Faust sold his soul to the devil for a *good time* of *twenty* years; our bribed political writer sells his for one of *four* years! The only difference between this thing in England and in this country is one of degree: in England the appointment lasts for life, here only till some other "willing slave" must be rewarded.

However, in this matter there is a distinction to be observed. When a man is selected on account of the ability displayed in some literary work, to fill an important office in the government of his country, to the duties of which he is to give his whole time and attention, and for which he is peculiarly fitted, bribery is out of the question. But in cases such as those Cobbett mentions, where the offices given were sinecures, it was bribery pure and simple. They were offices in which there were no duties to be performed; offices which the incumbents filled without at all interfering with their ordinary vocations; offices from which they derived salaries without doing any or hardly any work, or the duties of which they could easily consign to an underling for one tenth

of the salary attached to them. This is corruption in the receivers and bribery in the givers; it is taking money without giving any proper equivalent for it; it is taking money to which one has no just claim; and, in fact, it is just the same as *stealing* money.

In England it is a common thing for young men of talent to make themselves known to the powers that be by some literary production; it is a means of showing what they can do, and the political leaders, who are always on the lookout for young men of ability, come forward and offer them positions in the government service. The young writers do not seek the office; the office seeks them, and when their principles harmonize with the policy pursued and the objects aimed at by the government, it is right for them to accept the office. When Macaulay first showed the world his wondrous powers by his essay on Milton, he, like Byron, "woke up one morning and found himself famous;" and it was not long before he was offered, by the party whose principles he so finely defended, a seat in Parliament, and subsequently a place in the ministry—and so he went on. This, you see, is an entirely different thing; it is the reward of talent and ability in harmony with principle. Where corruption lies is in the receiving of an office with little or nothing to do, and the whole object of which is to put money in the hands of the incumbent and thus make a pensioner of him—"a slave of state." These amiable colleagues of Cobbett's were all of them slaves of state, and of course they came to hate him because he also would not become one. It was with reference to them that he was so fond of quoting Lafontaine's fable of the "Wolf and the Dog." The dog, who is a fine fat fellow, meets a lean and hungry wolf, and invites him to come and live with him at his home, where there is an abundance of fine fat things to be got to eat. The wolf agrees to go home with the dog; they set off together;

but on the way, the wolf notices a mark on the neck of the dog, and inquires what it is. “Oh, that is only the mark of the chain with which my master ties me up sometimes,” said the dog. “Ties you up!” exclaimed the wolf; “ties you up! Oh, that wont suit me; I would rather, a thousand times, endure my hunger, with liberty, than be tied up with the finest food in the world!”

Let every young man engrave this fable on the tablets of his memory. It applies in more ways than one; to more people than politicians. Every clerk, for instance, who accepts presents from the customers of his employer, becomes the slave of those customers, and the mark of the chain becomes visible, in his features, if not on his neck. Keep yourself free from such things, and you will have a manly and independent air and feeling; become a bribe-taker, and you will feel and act like a fawning, cringing, creeping cur.



## CHAPTER IV.

### “PORCUPINE” REVIVED.—THE HAWKESBURY AND ADDINGTON LETTERS.

In his letter to Mr. Rose, he tells us that it was while dining with Mr. Hammond (then Under Secretary of State for the Foreign Department, in company with Sir William Scott and Lord Hawkesbury (afterwards Lord Liverpool), that he was offered, as a gift, the proprietorship of one of two government papers, *The True Briton* and *The Sun*. This offer he refused, being convinced, as he said to Mr. Hammond, that “by keeping himself wholly free, and relying upon his own means, he should be able to give the government much more efficient support than if any species of dependence could be traced to him.” To which Mr. Hammond replied, “Well, I must



say that I think you take the *honorable* course, and I most sincerely wish it may also be the *profitable* one." "Now, Mr. Hammond is alive," says Cobbett, "and I am sure, if appealed to, will not deny that what I have stated is true;" otherwise I have no doubt Mr. Watson would have cast suspicion upon Cobbett's assertion in this case, too.

When he began his opposition to Mr. Pitt in 1804, and one of these very papers, *The True Briton*, dared to style him *an American* and a *traitor*, Cobbett very neatly replied, "Certain I am that I never gave any provocation, except that of refusing to become brother slave; a refusal which arose not only from my dislike for the situation itself, but from a conviction, which has since been fully confirmed by observation, that the pen of a slave seldom produces effect." He did not always, however, regard such attacks with equal coolness and good sense; for, on one occasion, being charged by one of the editors of these papers with sedition, and with instigating the army and navy to mutiny, he marched straight to the office of the offender, and "in less than three hours after the libel was published the libeller received personal chastisement in the very apartment where he had fabricated the libel." So tells Mr. Edward Smith; and the story simply shows how profoundly some accusations did affect him. Of one thing we may be sure: that in this encounter, as in that with Bache, he, like a true Englishman, used his fists, and not the cowardly Spanish or Italian poniard, or the equally cowardly American pistol.

Cobbett established, therefore, a paper of his own, a daily paper, which he called by the name he had already made famous, *THE PORCUPINE*, and in which he maintained monarchical principles, and uttered warnings against the doctrines of democrats and republicans. So it is pretty plain that his interview with Pitt had only increased his ardor for monarchy and its accompaniments. In this enterprise, however, he did not succeed. There is prob-

ably no undertaking whatever that is more terribly exacting, more unrelenting in its demands, more arduous and difficult in its duties, than the conducting of a daily newspaper. The requirements of every sort are boundless; the demands on the editor ceaseless and unlimited. "He who has been the proprietor of a daily paper for only one month," he says, "wants no Romish priest to describe to him the torments of purgatory." Cobbett, no doubt, took the greater part of the burden on his own shoulders; and although he had been assured that in London talent was so plentiful and assistance so cheap that the undertaking would not be nearly so difficult as in America, he found the *requirements*, nay, the *necessities* of a daily paper in London tenfold those of one in Philadelphia. There were so many more interests and classes to be satisfied, so many more matters to be attended to, in order to keep up with his rivals, that the labor was far greater than he had had in Philadelphia, and more than he was able to endure; so that he soon got tired of it, and gave it up.

The paper was merged into *The True Briton*. He himself afterwards attributed his failure to his refusal to use corrupt means to obtain money. He says in the same letter to Mr. Rose: "I could not *sell* paragraphs. I could not throw out hints against a man's or woman's reputation in order to bring the party forward to pay me for silence. I could do none of those mean and infamous things by which the daily press, for the greater part, was supported, and which enabled the proprietors to ride in chariots, while their underlings were actually vending lies by the line and inch." He also refused to accept the advertisements of quack doctors, though he was told that, by so doing, he would lose five hundred pounds a year. "In this resolution he may have been influenced by his recollection of what he had suffered from the quack Rush," says Mr. Watson, who could not conceive

of Cobbett's acting from any better motive than hatred of an old enemy. It will, perhaps, occur to the reader's own mind, that the man who acted thus with reference to so large a sum of money, which might have been easily acquired, and who refused the government offer of a whole newspaper *as a gift*, "with printing-machines and type ready-furnished," is not exactly the sort of man to give up the prosecution of thieves for the sake of a bribe, or to forge letters of recommendation in order to secure a government situation.

Cobbett now established in London, in partnership with an Englishman named Morgan, whom he had known in Philadelphia, a bookselling and publishing business. "In this shop," say his sons, "he might have made what fortune he pleased; for never was man more favorably circumstanced. He had the choicest connection that a tradesman could wish for, and as much of it as would have sated the appetite of the most thrifty man." But Cobbett's chief object was never the acquisition of wealth; he would rather have a hand in shaping his country's destinies than in making the finest fortune in England. He had been too long accustomed to expressing his opinions on public events, to remain contentedly silent now; so when Pitt resigned, which he did on account of his disagreement with the king concerning Catholic emancipation, Cobbett wrote several letters to the public prints endeavoring to show, while still professing great regard for Pitt, that the king was right and his minister wrong; maintaining that the Catholics would never cease to desire concessions until there was nothing left for them to ask, and that people who believed that the king was doomed to eternal damnation, unless converted to the Catholic Church, should never be entrusted with the functions of legislators or ministers. Let the reader remember this, when he comes to see what his views were a few years later. And when the Treaty of Amiens was

about to be made, he wrote a number of brilliant letters, addressed to Lord Hawkesbury and to the new premier Lord Addington, clearly showing the one-sidedness of that treaty, the great disadvantages which it presented to the English nation, and the immense advantages it secured to the French. These letters are written in such an impressive style that Mueller, the Swiss historian, speaks of them as "the most eloquent writing since the time of the two great professors of philippic oratory;" and a writer in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* speaks of them as the most finished of all Cobbett's writings. Cobbett was right too; for the state of things under that treaty was so unsatisfactory that the English people found it impossible to rest satisfied, and in less than a year war was again declared against Bonaparte. It was on account of Cobbett's refusal to illuminate his house, on the occasion of the celebration of the peace of Amiens, that a London mob, led mostly by government employés, attacked and demolished his house, for which offense he had "six of the villains" arrested, of whom three were tried, convicted, and—fined a few pounds!

He now republished his life of Tom Paine—whom he at this time branded with all the opprobrious names which his rich vocabulary afforded—and also published an edition of the *Collected Works of Peter Porcupine*, in twelve volumes. This work was subscribed for by the King, the Prince of Wales, a great number of the higher nobility, and many of the leading men of the time. The volumes consist mostly of his American controversial writings and extracts from *Porcupine's Gazette*.

Cobbett now began to be assailed, by various London newspapers, for his obstinacy in refusing to illuminate his house; to which assaults he replied by a satire in the manner of Swift, the address of "An Author to Prince Posterity," in which he lets the world know the by-no-means-flattering opinions of that prince concerning each

of his assailants. He felt, however, that he must have an organ wherein he could express his opinions fully, freely, and regularly concerning public affairs; so he began his "Weekly Political Register," a periodical which, to use his own expressive words, "came up like a grain of mustard-seed, and, like a grain of mustard-seed, spread over the whole civilized world;" and which he conducted until his death, in 1835.

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## CHAPTER V.

THE "REGISTER."—HOW NAPOLEON SHOULD BE RECEIVED.

THOUGH Cobbett's knowledge was limited, too limited for such a position as the editor of a periodical devoted to national affairs, he had the essential qualities of a great editor: he was independent-minded and large-hearted, manly, and fearless in the expression of opinion; he possessed an analytical and searching turn of mind, which, combined with matchless powers of expression, rendered him more than a match for every antagonist. No man ever surpassed him in clearness of statement, in logical analysis of the plans and purposes of public men, in skillful detection and luminous exposure of their weak points, or in hearty and powerful commendation of their good ones. Beginning in 1801 with three hundred copies, the circulation of the Register rose in 1803 to over four thousand copies (at tenpence a copy), in 1817 to twenty thousand, and occasional issues sometimes ran as high as thirty and even fifty thousand copies. Some years later he said it brought him an income of £15,000 a year. From this time Cobbett became a power in England; fighting, I might say—especially after his imprisonment in 1809—against all the world, and all the world against him. The grand trait in his character was his constant and entire

independence of mind; for he never counted the cost or cared for the consequences when he had once made up his mind to pursue a certain policy. He continued, in fact, to develop that innate love of fight, that dare-devil fondness for attacking the "big guns" and the "great idols" of the day—a characteristic which he no doubt inherited from his sea-roving Saxon ancestors—which he had so recklessly displayed in America..

He began by declaring that he hoped to contribute in some degree to the preserving of "those ancient and holy institutions, those unsophisticated morals and natural manners, that well-tempered love of natural liberty, and that just sense of public honor, on the preservation of which our national happiness and independence so essentially depend." He mightily aided in rousing the English people to active preparation for a vigorous reception of the French in case of the threatened invasion by Bonaparte; and his articles on the First Consul were so severe and trenchant that the French ambassador in London, M. Otto, was instructed to request the English Government to have Cobbett prosecuted for libel. The Ministry, however, never meddled with him; and he pretty soon after (July, 1803) showed his sense of gratitude to the government by writing that masterly Address to the People of England, entitled "Important Considerations for the People of this Kingdom," which is set down as one of his best pieces of writing. He showed his countrymen that the entire responsibility for the war rested with Bonaparte; described the appalling consequences should the invading Frenchman be victorious, and pointed out how to make a vigorous resistance against him should he attempt to invade their sacred island.

I must beg the reader to allow me to quote the first and last paragraphs of this admirable paper, in order to show him how clearly and forcibly he could state a case, and what a deep impression his words must have made:

“At a moment when we are entering on a scene deeply interesting, not only to this nation, but to the whole civilized world; at a moment when we all, without distinction of rank or degree, are called upon to rally round, and to range ourselves beneath the banners of that Sovereign, under whose long, mild, and fostering reign the far greater part of us, capable of bearing arms, have been born and reared up to manhood; at a moment when we are, by his truly royal and paternal example, incited to make every sacrifice and every exertion in a war, the event of which is to decide whether we are still to enjoy, and to bequeath to our children, the possessions, the comforts, the liberties, and the national honors, handed down to us from generation to generation, by our gallant forefathers; or whether we are, at once, to fall from this favored and honorable station, and to become the miserable crouching slaves, the hewers of wood and the drawers of water, of those very Frenchmen, whom the valor of our fleets and armies has hitherto taught us to despise; at such a moment, it behooves us, calmly and without dismay, to examine our situation, to consider what are the grounds of the awful contest in which we are engaged; what are the wishes, the designs, and the pretensions of our enemies; what would be the consequences, if those enemies were to triumph over us; what are our means, and what ought to be our motives, not only for frustrating their malicious intentions, but for inflicting just and memorable chastisement on their insolent and guilty heads.”

After describing the unscrupulous ambition and insolent pretensions of Bonaparte, and recounting the atrocities he had committed against other nations, he continues:

“On his return from Italy, which he left in a state of beggary and irretrievable ruin, he prepared for the invasion of Egypt, a country which was at peace with France, and against the people or the government of which France had no cause of complaint; but the conquest of this coun-

try was necessary in order to open a road to the Indian possessions of Great Britain. In pursuit of this object, Bonaparte invaded Egypt, where he repeated his promises to respect religion, property, and persons, and where, the more effectually to disguise his purposes, he issued a proclamation, declaring himself and his army to be true Mahometans; and boasting of having made war upon the Christians and destroyed their religion. One of his first deeds after this act of apostacy, was to massacre almost all the inhabitants of the populous city of Alexandria. 'The people,' says one of his generals, 'betake themselves to their PROPHET, and fill their mosques; but men and women, old and young, and even babes at the breast, ALL are massacred!' Some time after this sanguinary transaction, Bonaparte, having made prisoners of three thousand eight hundred Turks in the fortress of Jaffa, and wishing to relieve himself from the trouble and expense of guarding and supporting them, ordered them to be marched to an open place, where part of his army fired on them with musketry and grape shot, stabbing and cutting to death the few who escaped the fire, while he himself looked on and rejoiced at the horrid scene. Nor were his cruelties while in Egypt confined to those whom he called his enemies; for finding his hospitals at Jaffa crowded with sick soldiers, and desiring to disencumber himself of them, he ordered one of his physicians to destroy them by poison. The physician refused to obey; but an apothecary was found, willing to perpetrate the deed; opium was mixed with the food, and thus five hundred and eighty Frenchmen perished by the order of the general, under whose flag they had fought; by the order of that very man, to whose despotic sway the whole French nation now patiently submits. Let them so submit, but let us not think of such shameful, such degrading submission. Let us recollect, that this impious and ferocious invader was stopped in his career of rapine and



blood by a mere handful of Britons; and was finally induced to desert his troops, and to flee from the land he had invaded at the approach of that gallant British army, by which Egypt was delivered from the most odious and most destructive of all its plagues. This it is for us to recollect, and so recollecting, shame and disgrace upon our heads if we do not resist, if we do not overcome, if we do not chastise this rapacious, this bloody-minded tyrant, who has now marked out our country for subjugation, our fields for devastation, our houses for pillage; and who, in the insolence of his ambition, has held us forth to the world as a meek, a feeble, and cowardly race, destined to grace his triumphal car, and to augment the number of his slaves. . . .

“Such are the barbarities which have been inflicted on other nations. The recollection of them will never be effaced: the melancholy story will be handed down from generation to generation, to the everlasting infamy of the republicans of France, and as an awful warning to all those nations whom they may hereafter attempt to invade. We are one of those nations; we are the people whom they are now preparing to invade: awful, indeed, is the warning, and, if we despise, tremendous will be the judgment. The same generals, the same commissaries, the same officers, the same soldiers, the very same rapacious and sanguinary host, that now hold Holland and Switzerland in chains, that desolated Egypt, Italy, and Germany, are at this moment preparing to make England, Ireland, and Scotland the scenes of their atrocities. For some time past, they have had little opportunity to plunder: peace, for a while, has suspended their devastations, and now, like gaunt and hungry wolves, they are looking towards the rich pastures of Britain; already we hear their threatening howl, and if, like sheep, we stand bleating for mercy, neither our innocence nor our timidity will save us from being torn to pieces and devoured. The rob-

beries, the barbarities, the brutalities they have committed in other countries, though at the thought of them the heart sinks and the blood runs cold, will be mere trifles to what they will commit here, if we suffer them to triumph over us. The Swiss and the Suabians were never objects of their envy; they were never the rivals of Frenchmen, either on the land or on the sea; they had never disconcerted or checked their ambitious projects, never humbled their pride, never defeated either their armies or their fleets. We have been, and we have done all this: they have long entertained against us a hatred engendered by the mixture of envy and of fear; and they are now about to make a great and desperate effort to gratify this furious, this unquenchable, this deadly hatred. What, then, can we expect at their hands? What! but torments, even surpassing those which they have inflicted on other nations. They remained but three months in Germany; here they would remain forever; there their extortions and their atrocities were, for want of time, confined to a part of the people; here they would be universal: no sort, no part, no particle of property would remain unseized; no man, woman, or child would escape violence of some kind or other. Such of our manufactories as are movable they would transport to France, together with the most ingenious of the manufacturers, whose wives and children would be left to starve. Our ships would follow the same course, with all the commerce and commercial means of the kingdom. Having stripped us of everything, even to the stoutest of our sons, and the most beautiful of our daughters, over all that remained they would establish and exercise a tyranny such as the world never before witnessed. All the estates, all the farms, all the mines, all the land and the houses, all the shops and magazines, all the remaining manufactories, and all the workshops, of every kind and description, from the greatest to the smallest; all these they would

bring over Frenchmen to possess, making us their servants and their laborers. To prevent us from uniting and rising against them, they would crowd every town and village with their brutal soldiers, who would devour all the best part of the produce of the earth, leaving us not half a sufficiency of bread. They would, besides, introduce their own bloody laws, with additional severities; they would divide us into separate classes; hem us up in districts; cut off all communication between friends and relations, parents and children, which latter they would breed up in their own blasphemous principles; they would affix badges upon us, mark us in the cheek, shave our heads, split our ears, or clothe us in the habit of slaves! —And shall we submit to misery and degradation like this, rather than encounter the expenses of war; rather than meet the honorable dangers of military combat; rather than make a generous use of the means which Providence has so bounteously placed in our hands? The sun, in his whole course round the globe, shines not on a spot so blessed as this great, and now united kingdom. Gay and productive fields and gardens, lofty and extensive woods, innumerable flocks and herds, rich and inexhaustible mines, a mild and wholesome climate, giving health, activity, and vigor to fourteen millions of people: and shall we, who are thus favored and endowed; shall we, who are abundantly supplied with iron and steel, powder and lead; shall we, who have a fleet superior to the maritime force of all the world, and who are able to bring two millions of fighting men into the field; shall we yield up this dear and happy land, together with all its liberties and honors, to preserve which our fathers so often dyed the land and the sea with their blood; shall we thus at once dishonor their graves, and stamp disgrace and infamy on the brows of our children; and shall we, too, make this base and dastardly surrender to an enemy whom, within these twelve years, our countrymen

have defeated in every quarter of the world? No; we are not so miserably fallen; we cannot, in so short a space of time, have become so detestably degenerate; we have the strength and the will to repel the hostility, to chastise the insolence of the foe. Mighty, indeed, must be our efforts, but mighty also is the meed. Singly engaged against the tyrants of the earth, Britain now attracts the eyes and the hearts of mankind; groaning nations look to her for deliverance; justice, liberty, and religion are inscribed on her banners; her success will be hailed with the shouts of the universe, while tears of admiration and gratitude will bedew the heads of her sons who fall in the glorious contest."

Did not the author of the "Battle of Dorking" get a hint or two from this composition? or was the whole poem suggested by it?

This paper was offered to and accepted by the government, who thought so highly of it that they had a large number of copies printed, at an expense of several thousand pounds, and ordered it to be sent to every parish and be read from every Protestant pulpit in the country. Its authorship, like the Letter to the King which Cobbett wrote for Queen Caroline, was attributed to various distinguished men in England, and it was not until Cobbett got at variance with the government in 1809 that he declared himself the author. The government offered to reward him for it, which reward must have been something handsome; but Cobbett refused it; he could serve his country, he said, without reward. Was this a man to accept of bribes and to forge letters?

## CHAPTER VI.

OAKES AMES'S PREDECESSORS.—STUDY OF POLITICAL ECONOMY.

COBBETT wrote a great deal on finance and political economy, on the origin, nature, effect, and the best means of getting rid of, or rather of enduring or suffering, the National Debt, the great incubus of the English people. It is something he made a special study of, something about which he wrote more intelligently than nine out of ten of those who wrote on the subject. Whether right or wrong, he at least made people understand what he was talking about, which cannot be said of most of those who discussed the subject. And the circumstances which caused him to study this subject, as well as the sources of his information, are sufficiently curious to be given in his own words, as narrated by him in one of his Manchester Lectures (1833): "I cannot adopt a better method of explaining this matter (loan-making) to you, than by describing a transaction by which I was likely to become a loan-monger myself, and which first opened my eyes with regard to this matter. When I came home from America in 1800, I was looked upon by the government people as likely to become one of their vigorous partisans. It was the custom, in those glorious days of Pitt and paper, to give to the literary partisans of the government what were called 'slices' of a loan. For instance: Moses was the loan-monger; and as the *scrip*, as it used to be called, was always directly at a *premium*, a bargain was always made with the loan-monger that he should admit certain favorites of the government to have certain portions of scrip at the same price that he gave for it. I was offered such a portion of scrip, which, as I was told, would put a hundred or two pounds into my pocket at once. I was frightened at the idea of becoming responsible for the im-

mense sum upon which this would be the profit. But I soon found that the *scrip* was never to be shown to me, and I had merely to pocket the amount of the *premium*. I refused to have anything to do with the matter, for which I got heartily laughed at. But this was of great utility to me; it opened my eyes with regard to the nature of these transactions; it set me to work to understand all about the debt, the funds, the scrip, and the stock, and everything belonging to it."

This appears very much like the manner in which our own Congressmen were approached in the *Crédit Mobilier* affair. There were experts in this business, it seems, long before Oakes Ames; and in offering some of the scrip to Cobbett, they, too, no doubt, knew "where it would do most good;" but, fortunately, Cobbett had too much good sense and uprightness of character to be thus lured into the trap, so skillfully set, and escaped the ignominious fate of Ames's victims. Poor S. C.—! What a fall was there, my countrymen! Why did he not come out with it, and say, "Yes, I took it; here it is; make the most of it!" Had he done this, he would have been cheered by high and low from Maine to California; for there is more manliness in confessing a fault than there is meanness in the doing of it.

After reading the works of Adam Smith and George Chalmers, from which, Cobbett tells us, he was unable to get a clear view of the subject, he went over all the Acts of Parliament connected with the Bank of England from the time of William III. to his own time; and it was not till the year 1803 that he considered himself sufficiently acquainted with the subject to write on it. In that year he read Thomas Paine's "*Decline and Fall of the English System of Finance*," and of that work he says: "Here was no bubble; no mud to obstruct my view; the stream was clear and strong; I saw the whole matter in its true light; and neither pamphleteers nor speech-makers were,

after that, able to raise a momentary puzzle in my mind." He frequently afterwards speaks in the highest terms of Paine as a financier.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### THE NATIONAL DEBT—PITT'S WONDERFUL SCHEME TO GET RID OF IT.

WHEN we consider that after the peace of Amiens (1802) the national debt amounted to 620 million pounds, on which interest at the rate of five per cent. was paid, making the huge load of thirty-one million pounds annually for interest alone; when we consider that this sum was to be raised by taxation on a population of about ten millions; that of these ten millions about one million and a quarter were paupers, making an army of cormorants living on the body politic; that the debt increased, after the battle of Waterloo, to 885 million pounds—the greatest debt ever contracted by any nation—and that, finally, taxes to the amount of forty-four million pounds annually had to be raised to pay the interest; when we consider these facts, we may easily conceive of what importance this subject was in Cobbett's time, and how necessary it was for him to master the subject of political economy. There arose at that time a whole brood of schemers in this science, with whose plans and projects Cobbett had much to do. In fact this period in English history has a strong resemblance to that following the civil war in our own country, when we too began to feel the effects of our huge burden of debt and taxation; when we, too, had our commercial depressions and hard times, and a crop of greenbackers and repudiationists, and other false schemers, such as the English had. Cobbett began by attack-

ing Pitt's funding-system, which he showed to be false in principle and ruinous in practice, and to the application of which he attributed most of the misery that then prevailed in the country.

According to the Pitt sinking-fund, the entire interest on the national debt had to be paid continuously for about forty-five years before the people were to get any relief from it, or in other words, before they should get any diminution of taxation! It was to work off the national debt in some forty or fifty years, and all the world applauded it as the wonderful scheme of the heaven-born minister; but Cobbett showed that the debt kept pace with the fund, and that the scheme was therefore practically useless. "The country gentleman," says Cobbett, who thus graphically describes the effect of the system in a single sentence, "the country gentleman, who wishes and endeavors to live independently upon his estate, is obliged to pay to the government, for the support of the funding-system, so great a portion of the revenue of that estate, that he has not enough left to live upon, in the style in which his ancestors lived; and, in order to support that style, he sells part of his patrimony; once broken into, it goes piece by piece; his sons become merchant's clerks or East India cadets; his daughters become companions or ladies women to the wives of those in whose service the sons are embarked; the father, seeing his end approach, secures a life-annuity for the widow; some speculator purchases the tottering old mansion; and thus the funding-system swallows up the family." Cobbett advocated a reduction of the interest, or even the absolute non-payment of the interest, as the only means of getting relief. This latter plan, which I believe he subsequently relinquished, was founded on the principle, that it is better that a certain number of individuals suffer loss than that the whole nation should sink into misery and starvation. The advocacy of such a principle,



the unsoundness of which will the more readily be seen by applying it to a small community, created an immense outcry; he was attacked on every side as a repudiator and the counselor of schemes involving national dishonor; but he defended himself bravely, and although he was undoubtedly wrong in proposing non-payment of interest, he was right in seeking its reduction. However wrong in principle, he showed himself, in ability and knowledge of political economy, more than a match for his opponents. As a specimen of how he met his opponents in this discussion, I shall quote a single paragraph from an article in answer to an attack on him in a government paper called the *Courier*:

“As a consolation at parting, we are assured that the funding-system, though somewhat feeble, from having been so rapidly drawn upon, is still sound and salutary! We are told, that the sinking-fund is making rapid advances towards the extinction of the debt, and that the funds should be eased a little by raising the whole, or nearly the whole, of the supplies within a year! Comforting assurance! Profound remark! Judicious advice! As to the operation of the sinking-fund, we have seen, that, in the space of twenty years, it has tripled the nominal amount of the annual taxes raised upon us on account of debt, and has added in the degree of one half to the real annual amount of the taxes raised upon us on account of debt. This is rapid enough, I think. Does this sagacious politician, this profound political economist, want it to go on faster? What, then, in the name of all that is shallow and empty, does he want? But the funding-system is to be ‘eased;’ and how? By raising the whole, or almost the whole, of the supplies within the year. Does this wise man bear in mind, that, last year, the taxes raised amounted to about £38,000,000, and the expenditure to about £70,000,000? And if he does, does he besides think it possible to raise by this year’s taxes

nearly double the amount of the taxes raised last year? Away, away with all such dabblers and dreamers! Send them to 'Change Alley, or to Bedlam; but let them not approach even the steps to the Cabinet or the Parliament."

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE "JUVERNA" LETTERS.

COBBETT not only criticised men and measures pretty freely himself, but allowed others who wrote for his paper to do the same. His contributors imitated their chief; and one of them, unfortunately, or fortunately, as the final result may be judged, imitated him so successfully as to rouse the ire and call down the vengeance of persons high in power and authority. In the months of November and December, 1803, there appeared in the Register a number of letters signed "Juverna," in which the writer criticised the officers of the government in Ireland in a sarcastic and somewhat abusive style. He compared the Irish administration to the Trojan horse, "full of greedy speculators and blood-thirsty assassins;" spoke of the head of the viceroy, Lord Hardwicke, as composed of the same material as the famous horse, and declared that, after diligent inquiry concerning him, he found that "he was in rank an earl, in manners a gentleman, in morals a good father and a kind husband, and that he had a good library in St. James's Square." "Here," he continued, "I should have been forever stopped, if I had not, by accident, met with one Mr. Lindsay, a Scotch parson, since become (and I am sure it must have been by divine Providence, for it would be impossible to account for it by secondary means) Bishop of Killaloe, in Ireland. From this Mr. Lindsay, I

farther learned that my Lord Hardwicke was celebrated for understanding the modern method of fattening sheep as well as any man in Cambridgeshire." He also said that the appointment of Lord Hardwicke as viceroy of Ireland was like "putting the surgeon's apprentice to bleed the charity patients;" a comparison which is said to be quite in the style of Cobbett, and it is indeed not unlikely that his hand added a little pepper to the mess. The government seemed determined on securing a conviction, for they had a great array of talented counsel, consisting of six of the most eminent lawyers, including Perceval, afterwards prime minister, and the celebrated Harry Erskine. The Attorney-General, Sir Vicary Gibbs, characterized "Juverna's" letters as "cool and deliberate endeavors to degrade and villify the whole administration of His Majesty's government in Ireland;" and Lord Ellenborough, the Judge, declared that "to alienate the affections of a people from a government, by bringing that government, whether by ridicule or obloquy, into disesteem, must be considered as a crime," and that "to sneer at the people of Ireland, as submitting to be governed by a 'wooden head,' must be regarded as an instigation of the Irish to rebellion." Yet how mild "Juverna's" strictures seem compared with the utterances of Irish writers and Irish orators at the present day! The jury brought in a verdict of "Guilty of having attempted to subvert the king's authority," and Cobbett was condemned to pay a fine of £500.

No sooner was this action concluded than another, founded on the same letters, was begun against him by a different party. The first attempt was so successful that it encouraged this other "aggrieved party" to attempt the same thing. This was Mr. Plunkett, Solicitor-General for Ireland, who had been the public prosecutor in the famous trial of poor Robert Emmett. "Juverna" accused Plunkett of unnecessary severity in his pleading against

the prisoner, Emmett, who had made no attempt to defend himself against the charge brought against him, which circumstance alone made severity on the part of the prosecutor all the more unnecessary and ungenerous. Emmett's father had been the friend and benefactor of Plunkett, had oft entertained him at his table; and "Juverna" asserted that he (Plunkett) was probably the very man who had inspired young Emmett with the principles which finally brought him to the scaffold. Plunkett is known to have expressed the opinion, for instance, that if the bill uniting Ireland to England became a law, no Irishman was bound to obey it. "If any man could be found," said Juverna, "of whom a young but unhappy victim of the justly offended laws of his country had, in the moment of his conviction and sentence, uttered the following apostrophe: 'That viper, whom my father nourished, he it is whose principles and practice now drag me into my grave; and he it is who is now brought forward as my prosecutor, and who, by an unheard-of exercise of the royal prerogative, has wantonly lashed with a speech to evidence the dying son of his former friend, when that dying son had produced no evidence, had made no defence, but on the contrary acknowledged the charge and submitted to his fate'—if these words had been uttered in the presence of Lord Kenyon, he would have turned with horror from such a scene, in which, if guilt were in one part punished, justice was in the whole drama confounded, humanity outraged, and loyalty insulted." The case was tried before the same judge and jury, and the latter, after considering the matter for a few minutes, awarded the same amount of damages as in the former case, £500.

The writer of these letters was Mr. Johnson, an Irish barrister, afterwards a judge; and he having declared himself the author, Cobbett was relieved from those heavy fines, which, says Mr. Watson, were either paid by Mr.

Johnson or not paid at all. Cobbett remained silent concerning these trials; he never said anything about them; but they left a deep impression on his mind, all the deeper on account of his silence; an impression which eventually worked a great change in his views concerning the liberty of the British subject and the character of the British government. It was the first time that his loyal notions about British liberty of speech were seriously shaken. "He did not recognize in these proceedings," says Sir Henry L. Bulwer, in his excellent little work entitled *Historical Characters*, "the beauties of the British Constitution, nor the impartial justice which, he had always maintained when in America, was to be found in loyal old England. He did not see why his respect for his sovereign prevented him from saying or letting it be said that a Lord Lieutenant of Ireland was a very ordinary man, nor that a Solicitor-General of Ireland had made a very cruel and ungenerous speech, where the facts thus stated were perfectly true. The Tory leaders had done nothing to gain him as a partisan; they had done much that jarred with his general notions on politics, and finally they treated him as a political foe. The insult—for such he deemed it—was received with a grim smile of defiance, and grievous was the loss which Conservative opinions sustained when those who represented them drove the most powerful controversialist of his day into the opposite ranks."

## CHAPTER IX.

## PITT AND HIS POLICY.

IN the same year (1804), Cobbett addressed a series of Letters to Mr. Pitt, who had again become prime minister, in which he maintained that that minister had departed from the principles he formerly contended for; that he had failed to make good his pledges to the nation; that he had succumbed to France and consented to conditions that were humiliating and ruinous to England; that as far as he (Cobbett) was concerned, it was the general that deserted his army; not the soldier that deserted his general; that all his former aims had been abandoned, and all his promises falsified. "I was deceived," says Cobbett, "by your statements of 1799, to say nothing about the more elaborate statements of your Secretary, Mr. Rose, whose official pamphlet came forth to aid the deception. I believed you, when you so confidently and so solemnly declared, that 'the war might be carried on for any length of time without the creation of new debt,' and that 'it would not be difficult to provide taxes for eight years;' and though I saw you, in two years afterwards, make a peace, in which not only all your avowed objects of the war were abandoned, but by which the ancient honors of the country were surrendered; though I saw the balance of Europe completely upset; though the enemy seized state upon state even during the negotiations; and though I clearly saw and explicitly foretold that England herself would be exposed to that constant and imminent danger, of which every man is now feelingly sensible; in spite of all this, was I still to adhere to you, still to extol you, on pain of being stigmatized as a political deserter? Will any one, even in the purlieus of Downing Street and Whitehall, attempt to maintain a

proposition so repugnant to reason? Because you, either from choice or necessity; impelled either by your interest, your ambition, or the consequences of your errors, changed your course in politics, throwing aside all the principles which had induced me to follow you, was I bound to change too? Is the mere *name* of Pitt (for there was little else left) sufficient to compensate for the absence of everything that we desire to find in a minister? . . . Is there any one who will pretend, that you are not only so great as to have a right to abandon your principles, without exposing yourself to censure, but to render it a duty in others, to abandon theirs for the sake of yielding you support? Is there any one who will venture to urge a pretension so offensive, so insulting to the feelings of the world? And if not, if it be not insisted that every man who once supports a principle of yours becomes by that act solely your bondsman for life, then I think, if *desertion* be a proper word to employ, it will be allowed, that I did not desert you, but that you deserted me."

Cobbett's subsequent writings show, as clear as daylight, that Pitt's system of government impoverished and demoralized the English people to an unparalleled extent. Although Pitt began his career with a project of reform, he became alarmed after the French Revolution, and inaugurated a policy the reverse of all that was liberal, constitutional and wise. His grand blunder was the refusing of Napoleon's offer of peace in 1799, and beginning that series of wars and alliances against France, which finally ended, after his death, in the overthrow of Napoleon, but in the almost total ruin of the English people. He found England gold and he left it paper; he found England's debt 250 millions, and he left it over 600 millions; he found England's destitute poor 1 in 18 of the population, and he left them 1 in 7. He doubled the number of parish paupers, tripled the number of tax-gatherers, tripled tenfold the number of bank-notes, and banished specie

out of the kingdom; he more than tripled the pension-list in number of names as well as in amount of pensions; he made grants and pensions of more than half a million a year to his supporters and their kinsfolk; he maintained swarms of spies and informers, especially in Ireland; he effaced the lilies and yielded the honor of his country's flag in his negotiations with France; and finally, notwithstanding all his combinations and alliances against her, he could not prevent the power of France from breaking through all bounds, and extending itself over every part of Europe. Furthermore he loaned to two contractors, members of Parliament, £40,000 of the public money, *without interest*, in order to secure their votes; and he defended his friend and supporter, Lord Melville, when arraigned in the House of Commons for corruption, maintaining that he was guilty of no delinquency, though it was PROVED that by the malversation of his lordship and his secretary the country had suffered a loss of SEVERAL MILLIONS. "He was a *great talker*," says Cobbett, in his letter to Sir Robert Peel, "a man of showy but shallow parts; an impudent and dextrous declaimer; a man always capable to give reasons sufficient to keep his adherents in countenance in doing acts of injustice and folly. But nothing did he ever understand with regard to the well-governing of a country. He did not see the tendency of his schemes and efforts. He was short-sighted in the extreme. He appeared to possess not the smallest degree of profundity. He never dipped beneath the surface of things; but lived along from expedient to expedient. And he at last died, leaving bad to become daily worse and worse."

If the vast sums raised by Pitt for armaments and fleets and subsidies of foreign nations were needed for the defence of the liberty, the independence of Britain, or even for the protection of British interests, he would have been justified in what he did; but they were not;



they were expended in foreign wars and foreign alliances whose expediency was more than doubtful; the resources of England were drained in the vain and useless support of *legitimate monarchy*; in the vain and useless endeavor to suppress that parvenu, Napoleon, whom the narrow-minded George III. could not abide; to dethrone the man with whose nephew England subsequently formed a union of arms and of interests; with whose nephew England's queen associated on equal terms, whom she received into her halls and home with kisses and compliments. Such was Pitt's policy, a policy which bequeathed to England burdens under which she has been staggering ever since, and of which she will probably never get rid.\*

Cobbett had seen with his own eyes the wide-spread suffering and degradation caused by the false policy of this minister, and he could not help expressing his condemnation of him in a vehement and unrestrained manner. The distance of time renders the view clearer; Pitt is now no longer regarded as "the Heaven-born minister" whose policy displayed the highest wisdom of man; and for this very reason all the more honor is due to the man who had the sagacity to perceive and the courage to expose his fallacies at a time when every body else regarded him as almost superhuman in statesmanlike qualities.

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\* Leigh Hunt, in his Autobiography, thus sums up the history of Pitt's policy: "A coalition and a tergiversation alternately; now a speech and a fight against Bonaparte, who beat them; then a speech and a fight against England, who bought them off; then, again, a speech and a fight against Bonaparte, who beat them again; and then, again, as before, a speech and a fight against England, who again bought them off. Meanwhile the allies took every thing they could get, whether from enemy or friend, seizing with no less greediness whatever bits of territory Bonaparte threw to them for their meanness, then pocketing the millions of Pitt, *for which we are paying to this day.*"

## CHAPTER X.

HAPPY YEARS.—MISS MITFORD'S PLEASING DESCRIPTION.

COBBETT was now established on his farm near Botley, a village about five miles from Southampton, and sixty-eight from London. Here he had bought an estate, on which he lived the life of an English country gentleman; happy himself, and spreading happiness all around him; and here he spent the years between 1805 and 1809, which seem to have been the very happiest of his life. Prosperous in his business, and having a trusty man in London as managing editor of the Register and his various other printing enterprises, he passed most of his time on his farm, and devoted himself with great ardor and enthusiasm to all the sports and pleasures of country life. He not only had a great deal to do with the planting of American trees, and American corn, and the improving of his farm in various ways, but devoted a good deal of attention to coursing, fishing, single-stick exercise, and boxing-matches. Miss Mitford, who became acquainted with him about this time, gives, in her *Recollections of a Literary Life*, a very pleasing picture of his house, his family, and his manner of living at this time:

“Sporting, not politics, had brought about our present visit and subsequent intimacy. We had become acquainted with Mr. Cobbett two or three years before, at this very house, where we were now driving to meet an acquaintance of my father’s. For my father, a great sportsman, had met him while on a coursing expedition near Alton; had given him a greyhound that he had fallen in love with; had invited him to attend another coursing meeting near our own house in Berkshire; and finally, we were now, in the early autumn, with all manner of pointers, and setters,

and greyhounds, and spaniels, shooting ponies, and gun-cases, paying the return visit to him.

“He had at that time a large house at Botley, with a lawn and gardens sweeping down to the Bursledon River, which divided Mr. Cobbett’s territories from the beautiful grounds of the old friend with whom we had been originally staying, the great ‘Squire of the place. His own house,—large, high, massive, red, and square, and perched on a considerable eminence,—always struck me as being not unlike its proprietor. It was filled at that time almost to overflowing. Lord Cochrane was there, then in the very height of his war-like fame, and as unlike the common notion of a warrior as could be. A gentle, quiet, mild young man, was this burner of French fleets and cutter-out of Spanish vessels, as one might see in a summer-day. He lay about under the trees, reading Selden on the Dominion of the Seas, and letting the children (and children always know with whom they may take liberties) play all sorts of tricks with him at their pleasure. His ship’s surgeon was also a visitor, and a young midshipman, and sometimes an elderly lieutenant, and a Newfoundland dog; fine sailor-like creatures all.\* Then there

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\*Lord Cochrane, whose history is a very remarkable one, was one of the noblest of all Cobbett’s friends—a man of perfectly simple, guileless, open, candid disposition, without any worldly wisdom, but uncommonly fearless and skillful as a commander. Singularly enough, he was destined to undergo an experience similar to Cobbett’s, only far worse; and I am inclined to think that this sad experience, the result of an unjust sentence, was, like Cobbett’s, owing far more to his liberal political opinions than to any other cause. He was, in 1813, accused of being an accomplice in the Berenger frauds, by which the price of the funds was raised, on the report that a staff-officer had come in haste from the allied armies in France with the news of Napoleon’s defeat and death. He was tried by a court presided over by Lord Ellenborough—the same judge, or one of the judges, that condemned Cobbett to a fine of £1,000 and an imprisonment of two years in Newgate—

was a very learned clergyman, a great friend of Mr. Gifford, of the 'Quarterly,' with his wife and daughter—exceedingly clever persons. Two literary gentlemen from London, and ourselves, completed the actual party; but there was a large fluctuating series of guests for the hour, or guests for the day, of almost all ranks and descriptions, from the earl and his countess to the farmer and his dame.

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whose summing-up was notoriously unfair in this as in other cases. Lord Cochrane was condemned to pay a fine of one thousand pounds, to be imprisoned for one year, and to be exposed for two hours with another of the accused on the pillory in front of the Royal Exchange. His colleague in Parliament, Sir Francis Burdett, declared that if this last were done, he would stand with him on the pillory. Fearing a riot among the people,—who sympathized strongly with Lord Cochrane, and who, wiser than his judges, felt that he was innocent of the charge brought against him,—the government remitted this part of the penalty. The imprisonment, however, he underwent, and the fine he paid. The Bank of England retains to this day the one-thousand-pound note by which he paid his fine, on the back of which he wrote a sentence to the effect that he paid it under protest, and because, in his imprisonment, his health was failing (for he would never have been released until he paid the fine), and because he hoped, on regaining his liberty, to redeem his name from the stain which now rested on it. A penny subscription was opened to reimburse him for the amount of the fine, and long before the closing of the subscription-books the thousand pounds were raised. Not being able, on his release, to secure any employment from the government of his own country, he took service under the Chilian and Brazilian flags, 1821, and showed such marvelous daring and matchless skill in his efforts to free those peoples from the Spanish and the Portuguese yoke, that he defeated the Spaniards and the Portuguese in nearly every encounter, and earned the appellation of *El Diablo* (the Devil) from his enemies. Returning to England, he succeeded, with the aid of his devoted and faithful wife, in proving his innocence and causing the unjust sentence passed on him to be revoked or annulled. In 1832 he was restored to his position in the navy, and finally gazetted as rear-admiral. Dying in 1860, he was buried in Westminster Abbey, one of the most honored men in the kingdom.

The house had room for all, and the heart of the owner would have had room for three times the number.

“I never saw hospitality more genuine, more simple, or more thoroughly successful in the great end of hospitality, the putting of every body completely at his ease. There was not the slightest attempt at finery, or display, or gentility. They called it a farm-house, and everything was in accordance with the largest idea of a great English yeoman of the olden time.

“Everything was excellent,—everything abundant,—all served with the greatest nicety by trim waiting-damsels; and everything went on with such quiet regularity, that of the large circle of guests not one could find himself in the way. I need not say a word more in praise of the good wife, to whom this admirable order was mainly due. She was a sweet motherly woman, realizing our notion of one of Scott’s most charming characters, *Ailie Dinmont*, in her simplicity, her kindness, and her devotion to her husband and her children.

“At this time, Cobbett was at the height of his political reputation; but of politics we heard little, and should, I think, have heard nothing, but for an occasional red-hot patriot, who would introduce the subject, which our host would fain put aside, and get rid of as speedily as possible. There was something of *Dandie Dinmont* about him, with his unfailing good humor and good spirits; his heartiness; his love of field-sports; and his liking for a foray. He was a tall, stout man, fair, and sunburnt, with a bright smile, and an air compounded of the soldier and the farmer, to which his habit of wearing an eternal red waistcoat contributed not a little. He was, I think, the most athletic and vigorous person that I have ever known. Nothing could tire him. At five in the morning, he would begin his active day by mowing his own lawn, beating his gardener, Robinson,—the best mower, except himself, in the parish,—at that fatiguing work.

“For early rising, indeed, he had an absolute passion; and some of the poetry that we trace in his writings, whenever he speaks of scenery or of rural objects, broke out in this method of training his children into his own matutinal habits. The boy who was first down stairs was called the Lark for the day, and had, among other indulgences, the pretty privilege of making his mother’s nosegay, and that of any lady visitors. Nor was this the only trace of poetical feeling he displayed. Whenever he described a place, were it only to say where such a covey lay, or such a hare was found sitting, you could see it; so graphic, so vivid, so true was the picture. He showed the same taste in the purchase of his beautiful farm at Botley, Fairthorn; even in the pretty name. To be sure, he did not give the name; but I always thought that it unconsciously influenced his choice in the purchase. The beauty of the situation certainly did. The fields lay along the Bursledon River, and might have been shown to a foreigner as a specimen of the richest and loveliest English scenery. In the cultivation of his garden, too, he displayed the same taste. Few persons excelled him in the management of vegetables, fruit, and flowers. His green Indian corn; his Carolina beans; his water-melons, could hardly have been excelled even in New York. His wall-fruit was equally splendid, and much as flowers have been studied since that day, I never saw a more glowing or a more fragrant autumn garden, than that at Botley, with its pyramids of hollyhocks, and its masses of china-asters, of cloves, of mignonette, and of variegated geraniums. The chances of life soon parted us—as, without grave fault on either side, people do lose sight of one another,—but I shall always look back with pleasure and regret to that visit.

“While we were there, a grand display of English games, especially of single-stick and wrestling, took place under Mr. Cobbett’s auspices. Players came from all

parts of the country,—the south, the west, the north,—to contend for fame and glory, and also, I believe, for a well-filled purse. What a sore and bitter thing it must have been for Cobbett to be torn from this bright, cheerful, happy, healthy home, and cast among felons into a dark, close, and thick-walled prison! How true it is that it is not good for us to know the future, for this would destroy all our enjoyment of the present.”

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## CHAPTER XI.

### COBBETT AND DOCTOR MITFORD.

MISS MITFORD's father, Dr. Mitford, who is described by Mr. Horne as a “jovial, stick-at-nothing, fox-hunting squire of the three-bottle class,” and by his daughter as “the handsomest and cheerfulest of men,” seems to have become an intimate friend of Cobbett's. The two men had much in common; for the doctor, like Cobbett, was a man of plain, blunt, generous nature, a liberal in politics, loved by children and women, and passionately fond of country-sports. Had he stuck to such men as Cobbett, and to such sports as he and Cobbett loved, he would never have come to the pitiable plight which subsequently was his fate—dependent for a subsistence, after losing a fortune of £70,000, on the hard-won literary earnings of his daughter. He had fallen into the hands of aristocratic sharpers and gamblers in London, who found no difficulty in fleecing a man of such easy, open, and confiding nature.

There are some very curious and characteristic passages in Cobbett's letters to the doctor, recently published in “Miss Mitford's Friendships,” edited by Mr. L'Estrange. They show that his amusements and pursuits at this time were anything but literary, for he seems to have given his

whole heart and soul to farming and country sports. He was now at flood-tide in the very kind of life he loved. His letters are full of tree-planting, hare-coursing, and dog-breeding, and he almost forbids the doctor to say anything about politics at all. In the first letter (November, 1807), he describes himself as stopping in the rain, and climbing up an ash-tree, "with the aid of the parson's ladder," in order to obtain some seeds of the tree. In the next (December, 1807) occurs this very characteristic passage: "Give me some news about dogs. D——n politics! Is Snip with pup yet? A matter of far more importance than whether the Prince of Asturias be hanged or not; or whether his silly father be in a madhouse; or what grenadier is the gallant of his old punk of a mother. We are well set to work, truly, to pester our brains about these rogues! It matters not a straw to us whether Napoleon hang them all, or send them a-begging. And as to our fellows at Whitehall and Westminster, we shall be sure to do right if we hate them all. . . . When I write you about dogs (which are always the main subject) I will send you some seeds by way of episode."

Some months later, he writes in a postscript: "I am flattered by what you say about my *public letter*. Nothing was ever more read, I believe; and I am not without hope that it will produce some effect. I may be a very illiterate fellow; but I certainly am more than a match for all those pretenders to learning and philosophy. There is a damned cant in vogue, which, when attacked by plain sense and reason, discovers its weakness."

The following passage, written in October, 1808, is in his best, bold style: "The king's answer to the address of the Londoners is the most insolent thing of the kind that any king of England ever did. But do they not deserve it? Ay, that they do. He has three hundred thousand red-coats to keep us down. Why should such a king be at all delicate? As long as the Londoners flat-



tered him, it was all very well; but the moment they attempted to advise, they got a snap. Well, we deserve it, and ten thousand times more at his hands. The nation is a base, rascally crew, and he knows it. Has he not three million [£3,000,000] of droits of admiralty now in his pouch? Has he not done act upon act that I need not point out to you? Is he not exempted from the income tax? Well, then, who can blame him? Snails should be trod upon. Smash them, old fellow, for they deserve it all. Ay, and they will love you the better, too. Oh what a base and degenerate nation! Do you feel any anxiety about the result of this war for Ferdinand? I do not, and do not care which way it goes. . . . We are spending our money and our blood for the old race of kings against the people. We deserve to be treated like dogs, and like dogs we are treated."

What a commentary on royalty it is, that such an ignorant, incapable, and narrow-minded man as George III. should, for *sixty* years, have been allowed to rule over the vast British empire! According to Buckle, he had not a glimpse of one of the sciences, knew no more of the French people than of the people of Kamtchatka, and had hardly the ability of one of the lowest clerks of his government. And although surrounded by the most brilliant constellation of orators, writers, and statesmen, his every step was wrong, and he did more to ruin the nation than any of his predecessors. Why should such a man be the ruler of a great nation?

Here is a passage displaying, in the hopes of a fond father, the kindly side of his nature: "James always hears what you say of him, and always spreads your fame among those who do not know you, and to whom he prattles. As far as I can now judge, he will be just such another fellow as myself; and, were it not too much to indulge the hope, I would fain flatter myself that he will cause the Register to live when the first author of it shall mingle

with his native dust. As we proceed in life, the objects of our pursuits and our enjoyments change; the change proceeds as we proceed toward the grave; and even in our last moments, there is, in general, something to comfort us. Yet do the mass of mankind talk of the Author of this wise scheme as if He were no better and no greater than a partial politician.. Poor James has led me into this digression; he is now at the other end of the table, making scratches upon paper, which he calls 'drawing,' quite unconscious."

Unfortunately, Cobbett was separated from Dr. Mitford through some trouble arising with a third party. Mr. L'Estrange says that "a dispute between Mr. Cobbett and another gentleman, in which Dr. Mitford became involved, separated the families. Miss Mitford, nevertheless, continued to admire his talents, though admitting his violence, and spoke highly of his endearing domestic qualities. 'Milder thoughts attend him,' she writes; 'he has my good wishes, and so have his family, who were, and I dare say are, very amiable, particularly his very plain, but very clever and very charming, eldest daughter.'" Mr. L'Estrange informs us that this lady, Miss Ann Cobbett, is still alive; yet I remember reading, more than a year ago, a report of her death.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### ROYAL BEGGARS.—TRIAL OF THE DUKE OF YORK.

COBBETT now began to side with men of an entirely different stamp from those he formerly sided with; it was not enough for him to turn from Tories to Whigs, but from Tories to Radicals; for he seldom took a middle path in anything he ever did. He became the coadjutor of Major Cartwright, Mr. Henry Hunt, Lord Cochrane, and Sir Francis Burdett; all of whom sought a radical reform

in parliamentary representation. And when the king sent a message to the House of Commons, requesting an increase of the incomes of the junior members of his family, Cobbett came out with an article in the Register which at once showed the world where he stood. He expressed indignation at the request of the king, which request would, he said, if granted, add to the incomes of the royal family—all of whom, besides their pensions, held posts and preferments from which they derived considerable salaries—the sum of £51,000 a year, which would have to be raised by increasing the burdens of the people, who were already nearly crushed to earth with taxes of every description; and he very pertinently observed that it was not customary for a rich man to ask *the parish* to provide for his offspring.

The English people, however, sturdy as they are in maintaining their rights in other respects, never hesitate to let their princes, whenever they want money, thrust their hands deep down into the public purse, and take what they please. We have seen this often repeated since Cobbett's time; and although strong remonstrances have frequently been made against increasing the heavy burden of taxation by adding thousands of pounds to the already large incomes of the children of an enormously rich queen, it is, nevertheless, invariably done. It is a curious trait in the character of the English people, that when tens of thousands of the common people are straining every nerve in order to live, when trade is crushed, when the land swarms with beggars and paupers, when the most abject poverty stares them in the face wherever they turn, their representatives in Parliament unhesitatingly vote an addition of thousands of pounds to the incomes of their princes. One would think these princes would be ashamed to add to the burdens of the people, and that they would rather try, by renouncing part of their incomes and endeavoring to earn a living for themselves, to

alleviate than to aggravate these burdens. Why should not princes learn to work and earn a livelihood as well as other people? What on earth have they done, that working people should give their earnings to support them? Is not their inability to support themselves a proof of their worthlessness? Can there be anything more senseless than for a people to take one family out of a million, and feed and fatten, pet and pamper its members until they are ready to burst, and then fall down on their bellies and worship them?

Another circumstance connected with a member of the royal family soon gave him occasion for still more annoying observations; a circumstance regarding which he expressed the plain blunt sense of the English people in an unbearably pertinent and forcible manner. In fact, these observations were the primary cause, as we shall presently see, of the prosecution that was shortly afterwards begun against him, and of the severe punishment with which he was visited. But before relating this circumstance, I must state, that when the above proposition of an addition to the incomes of the members of the royal family was brought before Parliament, and when one of the noble lords proposed an addition of £1,000 a year to the income of each of the members of the royal family, the Duke of York, one of the sons of the king, professed unwillingness to receive from the people such an addition to his income, no doubt wishing it to be understood that he was too sensible of the weight of their present burdens to wish to add anything to them; but the truth was that he did not dare to accept of such an addition, lest some member, opposed to such grants, might draw attention to an item on the credit side of the civil list, in the following words: "By amount of sums advanced to his Royal Highness the Duke of York, to be paid by instalments of £1,000 quarterly, £54,000 17s. 6d.;" none of which instalments, says Mr. Watson, had, in all likelihood, been paid.

It was concerning the conduct of this Duke of York, who was at this time Commander-in-Chief of the army, and consequently in rank and station one of the greatest personages in the kingdom, that in 1809 a Parliamentary inquiry was made. This inquiry disclosed the astonishing fact that promotions, appointments, and exchanges in the army were procured through the duke's mistress,—a certain Mrs. Clarke, whom he had finally discarded,—at reduced prices, ranging from £200 all the way up to £900, and that the proceeds were used by her in keeping up the duke's establishment in Gloucester Place. And here I may mention that the purchase system, which existed in the British army till within a few years ago, was limited to the infantry and cavalry, and that the legitimate prices of commissions, in the Life Guards for instance, were in 1868 as follows: Lieutenant-Colonel, £7,250; Major, £5,350; Captain, £3,500; Lieutenant, £1,785; Cornet, £1,260. In the Foot Guards the prices were considerably higher, and in some of the line regiments not so high.\*

The motion for the inquiry was made by Mr. Wardle—a brave and talented gentleman, who came into the House of Commons for the first time, and who was threatened with all manner of dire consequences should he persist in his design of making such an inquiry—and seconded by Sir Francis Burdett, Cobbett's new friend. The trial lasted nearly two months; the charges were proved beyond a doubt; and yet, so strong is the reverence the English have for a prince of the blood, the delinquent was neither convicted nor dismissed. The speeches made in the duke's favor, and the arguments used to save him from dismissal and disgrace, are rare specimens of sycophancy and cowardice, even Canning shuffling and twisting in a shameful manner, for fear of offending his royal

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\*Chambers's Encyclopedia, article Army Commissions.

master, the duke's father. An address of the Commons to the king, announcing their belief in the guilt of the duke, and requesting his removal from his high position in the army, was, on motion, lost; but he was compelled, by the loud voice of public opinion, boldly and plainly expressed by Cobbett and other writers who thought like him, to *resign* his position, and thus the main object of the inquiry was attained. However, he was, some time afterwards, reinstated.

Cobbett's comments on the trial, from week to week, are remarkably calm, decorous, and impartial—qualities which he by no means always displayed. His observations are so striking, his examination of the speeches and the evidence so searching and severe, his interpretation of the significance of the whole transaction so just and comprehensive, that the whole story acquires a luminous and fascinating character in his hands, and reads like one of the best chapters in Macaulay's history.

I shall, perhaps, by and by, when we have gone over the events of Mr. Cobbett's life, and can more leisurely examine the character of his writings, give some extracts from these observations; yet I think it necessary to present one single passage here, in order that the reader may understand how Cobbett created, by his fearless pen, a strong feeling of enmity against him among persons high in authority:

“It was again, in this debate, urged, that the duke, after the intended reproof, would *reform*. . . . The idea of a hope of reformation does indeed harmonize perfectly with all the talk about the duke's being *imposed upon*; about his having fallen into the snares of an artful woman; about his being infatuated by her; and about his being blinded by the *excess of his passion* for her. The passion was not, however, so excessive as to prevent him from casting her off; aye, and that, too, without paying her the promised pension, without redeeming her

body from imminent danger of a jail, in about seven months after he had vowed everlasting love to her; nor was it so excessive as to prevent Taylor from carrying a message to her (said to be from the duke) threatening her with the *pillory* or the Bastille. But how stand the facts, as to the probability of his being *imposed upon* by this *artful* woman? To read these speeches [of the friends of the duke in Parliament] expressing confident hopes of amendment; to read the whining, snivelling expressions of sorrow for the existence of the connection, which had led to these disclosures; which had led to this exposure; which had led to this what Mr. Perceval calls *calumny* on the duke; to read these, who, that was unacquainted with the real state of the case, would not suppose Mrs. Clarke to be another Millwood, and the duke another Barnwell? Who would not suppose him to be a youth of seventeen or eighteen years of age? An infant at law? A mere chicken? Who would suppose him to be nearly *forty-six* years of age, and to have been a *married man* for about *twenty* years? The duke is three years older than I am; and he is two years older than a brother of mine who has been a *grandfather* these two or three years past; while Mrs. Clarke, the artful Mrs. Clarke, is now, I believe, little more than *thirty* years of age. It may be that the race of royalty, like trees and plants of the superior kind, require more time to bring them to maturity; but then, let it be observed, that the duke has had the *command of the army* for twelve or thirteen years past, and that the argument of superior kind cuts deeper against him than for him. If *I* were, at my age, to set up a defence upon the ground of *infatuation*, of being blinded by *the passion of love*, would not the world laugh in my face? Would they not hoot me off? Would they not turn up their noses and the palms of their hands against me?

“As to the *confidence* which Mr. Perceval expressed in

the close of his address, 'that his royal highness would keep in view the *uniformly virtuous* and *exemplary* conduct of his Majesty, since the commencement of his reign;' not knowing anything personally of the conduct here spoken of, I do not pretend to offer any opinion with respect to the general power and tendency of that *example*, upon the efficacy of which Mr. Perceval seems to place so much reliance; but taking it for granted that the example is what Mr. Perceval described it to be, it can have escaped no one, that *the duke has had this example before him for the last forty-six years*; and, whether it is likely that the example will now begin its operation upon him, is a question that I readily leave to the reader.

"Before I quit this part of the subject, I cannot suppress the regret that I feel at perceiving that amongst many people, and those too who ought to know better, the duke is thought worse of for keeping a mistress than for any other part of the conduct imputed to him. This argues a most miserable, unmanly, pitiful way of thinking; it argues that we are, as a correspondent expresses himself, 'a dwarfed nation;' that our virtues, as well as our vices, are all diminutive. Not that I would justify, or excuse, or palliate the conduct of an adulterer, and one, too, whose example was likely to have so mischievous an effect; but this vice, great as it is under any circumstances, and especially under such circumstances, sinks out of sight, it becomes not worthy of notice, when compared to the smallest of the acts of corruption, of low villainous, dirty corruption, that have been, with what truth the reader will judge, imputed to the Duke of York."

The Tory government of the day would, no doubt, have liked nothing better than immediately to make Cobbett feel their resentment for his temerity in venturing to criticise the conduct of so high a personage in such an unbearably disagreeable manner; but as the case was of



such a scandalous nature, and personally affecting the royal family, they were anxious that it should sink speedily into oblivion; so they did not dare to meddle with him at this time; they were waiting for a more convenient season, for some other offence for which they could more safely lay hands upon him; and it was not long before they found something that suited them exactly.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE CATASTROPHE.—TRIAL AND IMPRISONMENT.

IN one of the Registers of July, 1809, appeared the following article; the consequences of which were so serious, I feel compelled to give it entire:

#### “LOCAL MILITIA AND GERMAN LEGION.

“The mutiny amongst the LOCAL MILITIA, which broke out at Ely, was *fortunately* suppressed on Wednesday, by the arrival of *four squadrons* of the GERMAN LEGION CAVALRY from Bury, under the command of General Auckland. Five of the ringleaders were tried by a Court-martial, and sentenced to receive *five hundred lashes* each, part of which punishment *they received on Wednesday*, and a part was remitted. *A stoppage for their knapsacks* was the ground of complaint that excited this *mutinous* spirit, which occasioned the men to surround their officers and demand what *they deemed* their arrears. The first division of the German Legion halted at Newmarket on their return to Bury.”—*Courier* (ministerial) newspaper, Saturday, 24th of June, 1809.

“See the motto, English reader! See the motto; and then do pray recollect all that has been said about the way in which Bonaparte raises his soldiers.

“Well done, Lord Castlereagh! This is just what it was thought your plan would produce. Well said, Mr. Huskisson! It really was not without reason that you dwelt, with so much earnestness, upon the utility of the

*foreign* troops, whom Mr. Wardle appeared to think of no utility at all. Poor gentleman! he little imagined how a great genius might find useful employment for such troops. He little imagined that they might be made the means of compelling Englishmen to submit to that sort of *discipline*, which is so conducive to the producing in them a disposition to defend the country at the risk of their lives. Let Mr. Wardle look at my motto, and then say whether the German soldiers are of *no use*.

“*Five hundred lashes each!* Aye, that is right! Flog them; flog them; flog them! They deserve it, and a great deal more. They deserve a flogging at every meal time. Lash them daily, lash them daily. What! shall the rascals dare to *mutiny*, and that too when the German Legion is so near at hand! Lash them, lash them, lash them! They deserve it. O yes; they merit a double-tailed cat. Base dogs! What, mutiny for the sake of *the price of a knapsack!* Lash them! flog them! Base rascals! mutiny for the price of a goat-skin, and then, upon the appearance of the *German soldiers*, they take a flogging as quietly as so many trunks of trees!

“I do not know what sort of a place ELY is; but I really should like to know how the inhabitants looked one another in the face while this scene was exhibiting in their town. I should like to have been able to see their faces, and to hear their observations to each other, at the time.

“This occurrence at home will, one would hope, teach *the loyal* a little caution in speaking of the means which Napoleon employs (or rather, which they say he employs) in order to get together and to discipline his conscripts. There is scarcely any one of these loyal persons who has not, at various times, cited the *handcuffings* and other means of *force* said to be used in drawing out the young men of France; there is scarcely any of the loyal who have not cited these means as a proof, a complete proof, that the people of France hate *Napoleon and his govern-*

*ment, assist with reluctance in his wars, and would fain see another revolution.* I hope, I say, that the loyal will hereafter be more cautious in drawing such conclusions, now that they see that our 'gallant defenders' not only require physical restraint in certain cases, but even a little blood drawn from their backs, and that, too, with the aid and assistance of German troops. Yes; I hope the loyal will be a little more upon their guard in drawing conclusions against Napoleon's popularity. At any rate, every time they do, in future, burst out in execrations against the French for suffering themselves to be chained together and forced, at the point of the bayonet, to do military duty, I shall just republish the passage which I have taken for a motto to the present sheet.

"I have *heard* of some other pretty little things of the sort; but I rather choose to take my instance (and a very complete one it is) from a public print notoriously under the sway of the Ministry."

For writing and publishing this article—which, it must be confessed, is severe, yet obviously dashed off in a fit of indignation at such shameful treatment of his countrymen in the presence and by the aid of foreign mercenaries—Cobbett was tried and found guilty of libel against the government; sentenced to an imprisonment in Newgate of two years, to pay a fine of a thousand pounds to the king, and at the expiration of these two years to give one thousand pounds security for his good behavior for seven years. That was the penalty. The Duke of York had his revenge at last! The trial was held in the court of King's Bench, before Lord Ellenborough, who, having presided at his trial and conviction in two other libel suits, was not likely to be favorably disposed toward him in the third. In fact, his lordship declared, in his address to the jury, that, as the law required him to state his opinion, he had no hesitation in pronouncing the article in question "a most infamous and seditious libel." The

prosecuting officer (who is the first to give information of the matter) was also the same as in the previous trial, Attorney-General Gibbs, whom Cobbett ever afterwards called "the infamous Gibbs." Cobbett was his own counsel, and defended himself; and, although he spoke with great force and clearness, I am strongly inclined to think that if he had, like the government, employed first-class legal assistance, the result would have been a very different one.

Thus the government that he had once lauded to the skies, that he had proclaimed to be superior to every other, now laid its hand heavily upon him; depriving him of liberty and property, and seriously injuring him in his business relations. But this punishment, terrible as it was, instead of breaking him down and making him a tame and submissive servant of the men that inflicted it, had the contrary effect; for, from the moment he saw there was no leniency to be expected, from the moment he found that every overture was rejected, and that for the crime of expressing indignation at the flogging of his countrymen, he would have to be shut up for years, like a felon, within the dark and gloomy walls of Newgate, he firmly made up his mind to let them do their worst, to defy them, and to carry on uncompromising war against them until he had caused both them and the deplorable state of things they had created in England to disappear forever. "From that hour," says Mr. Edward Smith, "the sword which had been so near laying by to rust, had its blade new-tempered, while the scabbard was clean cast away forever."

Though never a republican, he now became thoroughly liberal in his views, and attacked the abuses of government with redoubled energy. He advocated the abolition of many harmful restrictions and a sweeping reform of Parliament. He always declared that he did not want anything *new*, but simply the true and faithful *enforce-*

ment of the laws of England; that the *kind* of government in England was the best in the world, and that all that was wanted was the proper execution of the laws. Though he felt deeply the severity and cruelty of the punishment inflicted upon him, and though perhaps every article he wrote after this was tinged with bitterness at the recollection of his never-to-be forgotten incarceration in Newgate, he never lost faith in the institutions or the laws of his country, nor ever for a moment despaired of eventually triumphing over his enemies.

“In no portion of his life, indeed,” says Sir Henry Bulwer, “did he show greater courage—in none does the better side of his character come out in brighter relief than when, within the gloomy and stifling walls of Newgate, he carried on his farming, conducted his paper, educated his children, and waged war (his most natural and favorite pursuit) against his enemies, with as gay a courage as could have been expected from him in sight of the yellow corn-fields and breathing the pure air he loved so well.”

His next Register is dated from Newgate prison—where he paid the keeper a guinea a day for two whole years in order to secure a room apart from the felons—and begins thus: “After having published seventeen volumes of this work, embracing the period of eight years and a half,—during which time I have written with my own hand nearly two thousand articles upon various subjects, without having, except in one single instance, incurred even the threats of the law,—I begin the eighteenth volume in a prison. In this respect, however, I only share the lot of many men who have inhabited this very prison before me; nor have I the smallest doubt that I shall hereafter be enabled to follow the example of those men. On the triumphing, the boundless joy, the feasting and shouting, of the speculators or public robbers, and of all those, whether profligate or hypocritical villains, of whom I have

been the scourge, I look with contempt; knowing very well, feeling in my heart, that my situation, even at this time, is infinitely preferable to theirs; and as to the future, I can reasonably promise myself days of peace and happiness, while continual dread must haunt their guilty minds, while every stir and every sound must make them quake for fear. Their day is yet to come."

Then he goes on to notice various points in the last speech of the Attorney-General (who, he says, made three speeches to his one), which speech he was not allowed to answer verbally. The Attorney-General accused him of creating among the soldiers a spirit of impatience and insubordination, and of telling them that they were hardly, cruelly, and tyrannically dealt with: whereas "the situation of the soldiers of this country was more comfortable than at any former period;" also of writing merely for the sake of "base lucre," and declared that the article in question was one of the blackest libels ever penned, tending directly to the destruction of civilization and good government.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### COBBETT'S REPLY TO THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S ACCUSATION.

WHAT hurt Cobbett most was the accusation that he wrote merely for the sake of "base lucre," and against this charge—of the falsity of which the reader must be convinced from various circumstances already mentioned—he made a strong defence; part of which I must be allowed to quote, as it throws more light on his character and influence than anything that can be said by his biographer:

"In general, it is a topic of exaltation, that industry and talent are rewarded with the possession of wealth.

The great object of the teachers of youth, in this country, seems always to have been instilling into their minds that wealth was always the sure reward of industry and ability. Upon what ground, then, is it, that the 'amassing of wealth,' the 'making of a fortune,' by the use of industry and talents, is to be considered as meriting reproach in *me*? The fact is not true; I have not *amassed wealth*, and have not *made a fortune*, in any fair sense of those phrases. I do not possess a quarter as much as I should, in all probability, have gained by the use of the same degree of industry and talent in trade or commerce. But if the fact were otherwise, and if I rode in a coach-and-four, instead of keeping one pleasure-horse, and that one only because it is thought necessary to the health of my wife; if I had really a fortune worthy of being so called, what right would any one have to reproach me with the possession of it? I have been laboring seventeen years since I quitted the army. I have never known what it was to enjoy any of that which the world calls pleasure. From a beginning, with nothing, I have acquired the means of making some little provision for a family of *six children* (the remains of thirteen), besides having for several years maintained almost wholly three times as many children of my relations. And am I to be reproached as a lover of 'base lucre' because I begin to have a prospect (for it is nothing more) of making such provision? And am I now, upon such a charge, to be stripped, in one way or another, of the means of making such provision? Was it manly and brave for the Attorney-General, when he knew that I should not be permitted to answer him, to make such an attack, not only upon me, but upon the future comfort of those who depend upon me for support? Verily, *this* is not to be forgotten presently. As long as I or my children are able to remember, *this* will be borne in mind; and I have not the smallest doubt of seeing the day when Sir Vicary Gibbs, and those who belong to him,

will not think of any such thing as that of reproaching us with the possession of our own earnings."

He was at this time carrying on, besides THE REGISTER, three other publications, three great and useful works, THE PARLIAMENTARY HISTORY, THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES,\* and THE STATE TRIALS; and after mentioning the fact, that from these works, though immediately and permanently useful to the public, he could not expect any present gain, and that "BASE LUCRE" could form no part of the object with which they were undertaken, he continues in this pleasing strain: "I have heard others applauded for their PUBLIC SPIRIT in encountering what have been called great *national works*. What a clatter was made in this way about large editions of Shakespeare and Milton, which were at last got rid of by means of a *lottery*, authorized by Act of Parliament! The terms *liberality* and *munificence* were given to the undertakers of those works; but was there anything in them of *national utility* worthy of being compared with these works of mine? I have encountered these works unaided by anybody; I shall ask the Honorable House for no Lottery to carry them through. I trust solely to their real *intrinsic merit* for their success; and if they do succeed, shall I therefore be accused of seeking after '*base lucre?*' This work (the Register), of which I now begin the eighteenth volume, has had nothing to support it but its own merits. Not a pound, not even a pound in paper money was ever expended upon advertising it. It came up like a grain

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\* Begun 1803, sold to his printer, HANSARD, in 1810. "This undertaking," says Mr. Edward Smith, "has long since made the name of HANSARD famous; but this is the place to remind the reader that its origin and successful issue for a number of years, is one of the long-forgotten public services of William Cobbett." When Cobbett was condemned to two years' imprisonment as the author, Hansard received three months as the printer, of the so-called libel



of mustard-seed, and like a grain of mustard-seed it has spread over the whole civilized world. And why has it spread more than other publications of the same kind? There have not been wanting imitations of it. There have been some dozens of them, I believe: same size, same form, same type, same heads of matter, same title, all but the word expressing my name. How many efforts have been made to tempt the public away from me, while not one attempt has been made by me to prevent it! Yet all have failed. The changeling has been discovered, and the wretched adventurers have then endeavored to wreak their vengeance on me. They have sworn that I write badly; that I publish nothing but trash; that I am both fool and knave. But still the readers hang on to me. One would think, as Fa'staff says, that I had given them love-powder. No; but I have given them as great a rarity, and something fully as attractive; namely, TRUTH in CLEAR LANGUAGE. I have stripped statement and reason of the foppery of affectation; and, amongst my other sins, is that of having shown, of having proved beyond all dispute, that very much of what is called '*learning*' is imposture, quite useless to any man whom God has blessed with brains.

"THE REGISTER has created in England, and even in other countries, a new taste in reading, and an entirely new set of notions upon political matters; and can it be possible that any one is to be persuaded, that such an effect is to be produced by mere *libelling*? No; nor will any one believe that it is to be produced by a mind bent upon 'base lucre.' If 'base lucre' had been my principal object, or indeed if it had been a considerable object with me, I never should have written with effect; because, to write with effect, one's mind must be free, which it never can be if the love of gain be uppermost."

He then shows the inconsistency of the charge of "base lucre" and "seditious intentions." If the first

were true, the latter could not be; for with the destruction of the government, with insurrection and confusion in the country, all the works he was publishing, from which his profits were to come, would at once become valueless. And with reference to his farms, of which we shall speak presently, he says: "For a man who has real property to wish for the annihilation of those laws by which alone that property is sacred to him, is not likely; for a man who, like me, is planting trees and sowing acorns and making roads and breaking up wastes, to wish for the destruction of order and law and property, is still less likely."

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## CHAPTER XV.

### ENGLAND AFTER THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

ONE may imagine the state of things in England, the degree of liberty of speech, at this time, when an article of such a character should cause its author to be consigned to a jail with thieves, swindlers, and murderers. One would imagine that the right-thinking and generous-minded part of the English people would have protested against it, and condemned it in such unmistakable tones that the government would not have dared to put the verdict into execution. But those were evil times, in which generous impulses were suppressed and opposition to authority was looked upon as treason. The French Revolution had stopped all political progress in England, and from 1793 to 1830 the country was governed on reactionary principles; the terrible scenes enacted in that Revolution having frightened every liberal thought out of the heads of Englishmen, and caused the very name of *reformer* to be hated like the name of *atheist*. Even Burke, the able, philosophic, highly-cultured, prac-

tical Edmund Burke; even he had his head turned by this amazing Revolution, and advocated principles the very reverse of what he previously contended for. The same man who, twenty years before, had clearly shown the folly and impracticableness of the war against the American colonies, now advocated a European war, compared with which the American war was but a mere trifling episode. He insisted on the right of England to compel France to change her principles, and pleaded for a war, a long war, a war of revenge, a war of extermination against that "gang of robbers," that "nation of murderers," that "hell," that "republic of assassins," that band of "miscreants" who were "the dirtiest, lowest, most fraudulent, most knavish of chicaners." \*

"To profess liberal views," says Trevelyan, speaking of this period in his admirable *Life of Lord Macaulay*, "was to be hopelessly excluded from all posts of emolument, from all functions of dignity, from the opportunities of business, from the amenities of society. Quiet tradesmen, who ventured to maintain that there was something in Jacobinism besides the guillotine, soon found their town or village too hot to hold them, and were glad to place the Atlantic between themselves and their neighbors. The county representation of England was an anomaly, and the borough representation little better than scandal. The press was gagged in England and throttled in Scotland. Every speech, or sermon, or pamphlet, *the substance of which a crown lawyer could torture into a semblance of sedition*, sent its author to the jail, the hulks, or the pillory."

Leigh Hunt, at this time editor and part proprietor of the *Examiner*, had an experience very similar to Cobbett's. He was prosecuted for libel against the government three or four times by this same Sir Vicary Gibbs,

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\* Buckle, *History of Civilization in England*, Vol. I., p. 338.

whom he describes as "a little, irritable, sharp-featured, bilious-looking man;" as "a bad reasoner, who made half-witted charges," and one who "assumed we could have *no motives for writing but mercenary ones.*" This last seems to have been a standing accusation with him. After various unsuccessful prosecutions, Hunt was overtaken at last. In 1813 he thus fearlessly described the profligate and worthless Prince Regent, who had lately been covered with flattering appellations and lauded to the skies by some wretched sycophantic rhymers: "What person unacquainted with the true state of the case would imagine, in reading these astounding eulogies, that this 'Glory of the people' was the subject of millions of shrugs and reproaches!—that this 'Protector of the Arts' had named a wretched foreigner his historical painter, in disparagement or in ignorance of the merits of his own countrymen!—that this 'Maecenas of the age' patronized not a single deserving writer!—that this 'Breather of eloquence' could not say a few extempore words, if we are to judge, at least, from what he said to his regiment on its embarkation for Portugal!—that this 'Conqueror of hearts' was the dissembler of hopes!—that this 'Exciter of desire,' this 'Adonis in loveliness,' was a corpulent man of fifty!—in short, this *delightful, blissful, wise, pleasurable, honorable, virtuous, true, and immortal* prince, was a violator of his word, a libertine over head and ears in disgrace, a despiser of domestic ties, the companion of gamblers and demireps, a man who had just closed half a century without one single claim on the gratitude of his country or the respect of posterity!"

For this picture, true no doubt to the life, and worthy of Cobbett himself, Leigh Hunt, with his brother John, who was his partner, was condemned to suffer, and he and his brother did suffer, a punishment nearly the same as Cobbett's—that is, the two brothers were sentenced to

two years imprisonment, in separate jails, and a fine of five hundred pounds each.\*

So shamelessly corrupt was the government at this time that seats in Parliament and government situations were actually advertised for sale, in the public prints, and privately sold to the highest bidder. Cobbett counted fifty-seven such advertisements in the morning papers. Members of Parliament sold their votes—for prices ranging from £200 to £1,000—almost without disguise.† The public purse was plundered by all manner of jobbers; hosts of pensioners, placemen, sinecurists, and parasites of every description fed and fattened at the public expense. The court was so shamelessly profligate that the festive entertainments of the *princes and their mistresses* were regularly chronicled in the ministerial or court paper;‡ and the daily press, that power which has been called the fourth estate, the guardian of freedom and the scourge of villainy, was never more thoroughly corrupt and venal than at this time. The ministry bought up scores of newspapers, in which they published anything and every thing they desired; they hired troops of writers, who wrote at their dictation essays, pamphlets, reviews, and leading articles, all aimed against liberal ideas, which

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\*Strange enough, this same Leigh Hunt, whose fellow-martyrship with Cobbett ought to have caused him, one would imagine, to have felt some sympathy and kindly feeling toward him, was, apparently through jealousy, a bitter enemy of his, attacking him whenever he had a chance. The reader has only to be reminded that ‘Skinpole’ in Dickens’s *Bleak House*, is said to be a portrait of Leigh Hunt.

†“Danby did not exactly introduce the practice of bribing members of Parliament, but he was the minister who reduced it to a system. The direct bribery of members in hard cash lasted for about a century; Lord Rockingham was the first prime minister who refused a bribe. His term of office was remarkably short. The price of a member’s vote ranged, under George III., from £200 to £1,000.” *Bribery in Parliament: Cornhill Magazine.*

Selections from Cobbett’s *Political Works*, Vol. III., p. 69.

were scattered broadcast over the country and delivered free of expense. When the opinion of the nation was against them, they made up their minds to change that opinion by hook or by crook. This was done during the whole sixty years of the retrograde and disastrous reign of George the Third;\* and in Cobbett's time it was about as bad as it had been at any time during this miserable reign. He tells us that in all the daily papers, paragraphs from individuals, or bodies of men, were inserted for payment, no matter what they contained, so that the pro-

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\* Every American should know that the Acts leading to the war against the Colonies were carried through in this way, against the unmistakable wishes of the English people. *Anecdotes of Lord Chatham*, Vol. II., chap. 41. The reader will remember the example given in Cobbett's own father and his friends at the fair. Judging from the names of the mercenary government writers given in this book, the *Anecdotes of Lord Chatham*, they were all, curiously enough, except the first and perhaps the last, Scotchmen: *Dr. Samuel Johnson*, Messrs. *Dalrymple*, *Macpherson*, *Stuart*, *Lind*, *Knox*, and *Naduit*. The Scotch and the Swiss are noted for their love of liberty and their heroic bravery in defence of it for themselves: but it seems they have no objection to be paid for depriving other people of it. There were many Scotchmen, however, who fought by the side of Washington; among others, the famous St. Clair—the Scotch always spell the name Sinclair—who belonged to the same family as the well-known Sir John Sinclair and Catharine Sinclair of Thurso Castle. The stain on the Scotch name, bad as it may be regarded, is trifling compared to that on the name of the Germans, who allowed themselves to be bargained for and bought like cattle, wholesale, and transported to America to fight the Americans. George III., who paid his royal brother, Frederick II. of Hesse-Cassel, the enormous sum of £3,000,000 of English money for 22,000 head of these cattle, was himself practically a German, crammed with all the narrow *caste* notions of his race; hence all his ideas of public policy were illiberal, despotic, unconstitutional, and in direct opposition to those of the people over whom he ruled. There is no state in Germany, even at the present day, that has anything like representative, responsible government.

prietor was not exposed to the lash of the law. The price being enormous—half a guinea an inch—the rich man had the whole press for his apologist; while the poor man, if he were oppressed or slandered, had not the means of appealing to the justice of the public. He gives as an instance, the case of Colonel Cochrane Johnston, who, being tried by Court-martial for an offence against the laws, and acquitted, “that deeply injured gentleman was unable to obtain the publication even of so brief a thing as the mere decision without paying, to the different daily papers, fifty or sixty guineas;” while long paragraphs in defence of other less worthy but wealthy parties, whom he names, appeared in all the daily papers. “Money, the *public* money; to share in the immense sums raised upon the people; in some way or other to effect this purpose, is the object of ninety-nine out of every hundred persons who write and publish their writings, and, which object is, and must ever be, in direct and necessary hostility to the interests of the people at large. If, therefore, there ever was in the world a thing completely perverted from its original design and tendency, it is the press of England; which, instead of enlightening, does, as far as it has any power, keep the people in ignorance; which, instead of cherishing notions of liberty tends to the making of the people slaves; and which, instead of being their guardian, is the most efficient instrument in the hands of all those who oppress, or who wish to oppress them.”\* Cobbett had such contempt for the writers on the daily and weekly press, that he once expressed a wish to see the whole crew drawn up in a row in Hyde Park, in order that the public might see “what a mean, rascally, shabby, and despicable set of wretches undertook to direct public opinion.”

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\*Selections from Political Works, Vol. III., p. 143.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## HOW TO LIVE IN A PRISON.

As COBBETT had always been fond of agricultural pursuits, and as he had for some time been prosperous in his printing and publishing enterprises, he had bought, as we have seen, an estate at Botley, near Southampton. This estate consisted of a large house in the village of Botley, and the two farms called Fairthorn and Raglington, with two other smaller ones. "He had determined on leading a country life," say his sons, "and had taken all the means to do so, when the government prosecution was begun; and, as a considerable purchase, such as he had made, partly upon the faith of the profits of his literary labors, required more than ordinary exertion and care, the reader can imagine, better than we can describe, how ruinous his mere absence from home was at this time." Everything was unsettled; all his plans and prospects were deranged; and he had to make what arrangements he could for the management of his affairs by others. With his bookselling business in London, with the various works he was editing and publishing besides the Register, with his sowing and planting and cattle-raising and dog-breeding, he was a busy man at this time, and could ill afford to be shut up and kept away from everything in which he had such deep interest. He did, it seems, offer the government to suppress the Register altogether, if they would revoke the sentence of imprisonment. But in vain; they were thirsting for vengeance, and nothing else would satisfy them. Of this offer, I shall have something to say by and by. When he saw no escape from the dire ordeal, he went bravely to work, and made the most he could of a desperate state of things; in fact, it is wonderful how much he did under such unpromising



circumstances. The Register he continued to edit from his prison. He often wrote when surrounded by his children, who frequently visited him, and he never composed with greater pleasure, or was more delighted, than when they made the loudest noise or played the wildest pranks around him. The picture that he himself gives of his prison-life finely illustrates his character as a father and husband; for notwithstanding the bitter war he carried on against the government and its agents, all was peace, affection, and harmony in his family. He was loved to adoration by his children, whom he brought up in a singularly primitive sort of manner, never teaching them their letters until they had learned all the operations of farming, as well as hunting, shooting, and the like; and when they had learned all these things, he taught them to read and to write by an ingenious method of his own.

“It was in the month of July,” he says, “when that horrible sentence was passed upon me. My wife, having left her children in the care of her good and affectionate sister, was in London, waiting to know the doom of her husband. When the news arrived at Botley, the three boys, one eleven, another nine, and the other seven years old, were hoeing cabbages in that garden which had been the source of so much delight. When the account of the savage sentence was brought to them, the youngest could not, for some time, be made to understand what a *jail* was, and when he did, he, all in a tremor, exclaimed: ‘Now, I’m sure, William, that Papa is not in a place like that!’ The other, in order to disguise his tears and smother his sobs, fell to work with the hoe, and chopped about like a blind person. This account, when it reached me, affected me more, filled me with deeper resentment, than any other circumstance.

“Now, then, the *book-learning* was forced upon us. I had a farm in hand. It was necessary that I should be constantly informed of what was doing. I gave *all the*

*orders*, whether as to purchases, sales, ploughing, sowing breeding; in short, in regard to everything; and the things were endless in number and variety, and always full of interest. My eldest son and daughter could now write well and fast. One or the other of these was always at Botley; and I had with me (having hired the best part of the keeper's house) one or two, besides either this brother or sister; the mother coming up to town about once in two or three months, leaving the house and the children in the care of her sister. We had a HAMPER, with a lock and two keys, which came up once a week, or oftener, bringing me fruit and all sorts of country fare; for the carriage of which, cost free, I was indebted to as good a man as ever God created, the late Mr. George Rogers, of Southampton. This HAMPER, which was always, at both ends of the line, looked for with the most lively feelings, became our SCHOOL. It brought me a journal of labors, proceedings and occurrences, written on paper of shape and size uniform, and so contrived, as to margins, as to admit of binding. The journal used, when my son was the writer, to be interspersed with drawings of our dogs, colts, or anything that he wanted me to have a correct idea of. The hamper brought me plants, bulbs, and the like, that I might see the size of them; and always every one sent his or her *most beautiful flowers*; the earliest violets, and primroses, and cowslips, and blue-bells; the earliest twigs of trees; and, in short, everything that they deemed calculated to delight me. The moment the hamper arrived, I, casting aside everything else, set to work to answer *every question*, to give new directions, and to add everything likely to give pleasure at Botley. Every hamper brought one 'letter,' as they called it, if not more, from every child; and to every letter I wrote an answer, sealed up and sent to the party, being sure that that was the way to produce other and better letters; for, though they could not read what I

wrote, and though their own consisted at first of mere *scratches*, and afterwards, for a while, of a few words written down for them to imitate, I always thanked them for their '*pretty letter*,' and never expressed any wish to see them *write better*; but took care to write in a very neat and plain hand *myself*, and to do up my letter in a very neat manner. Thus, while the ferocious tigers [who condemned him] thought I was doomed to incessant mortification, and to rage that must extinguish my mental powers, I found in my children, and in their spotless and courageous and affectionate mother, delights to which the callous hearts of those tigers were strangers."

But the more serious occupation of Cobbett, apart from his articles for the Register, was the writing of his famous book, "Paper against Gold." He thus describes, in one of his public letters to Lord Brougham, the inception of that work: "The next day after Gibbs, Ellenborough, and their associates, had got me safe in Newgate, an American friend of mine, who had the clearest and soundest head of almost any man I ever knew in my life, and for whom I had, and still have, a very great personal regard, came to see me in a very miserable hole, though better than that to which I had been sentenced, and from which I finally ransomed myself, at the expense, for lodging alone, of *twelve hundred pounds*. Being seated, one of us on each side of a little bit of a table, he said, looking up into my face, with his arms folded upon the edge of the table, 'Well, they have *got you*, at last. And now, what will you do?' After a moment or two, I answered, 'What do you think I ought to do?' He then gave me his opinion, and entered pretty much into a sort of plan of proceedings.

"I heard him out, and then I spoke to him in much about these words: 'No, Dickins, that will never do. This nation is drunk; it is mad as a March hare, and mad it will be till this beastly frolic (the war against Napoleon)

is over. The only mode of proceeding, in order to get satisfaction, requires great patience. The nation must suffer at last, and greatly and dreadfully suffer, and in that suffering it will come to its senses, and to that justice of sentiment which is now wholly banished. I shall make no immediate impression by tracing the paper-system to its deadly root. The common people will stare at me, and the rich ruffians will sneer; but the time must come when all will listen; and my plan is to *write that now* which I can hold up to the teeth of my insolent enemies and taunt them with in the hour of their distress.'—'Aye,' said he, 'but the *worms* may be taunting you before that time.'—'No matter,' said I, 'for though fame, after the worms have been at work, is a foolish thing, you must recollect that I have *no other line to pursue*. By pursuing this, I secure a chance of final success and satisfaction, and by no other can I perceive a possibility of obtaining even that chance.' I then described to him the outline of what I intended to do with regard to the paper-system, and after passing a very pleasant afternoon, during which we selected and rejected several titles, we at last fixed upon that of '*Paper against Gold*,' which I began to write and to publish a few weeks afterwards, and which, at the end of thirteen years, I hold up to the noses of the insolent foes who then exulted over me, and tell them, 'This is what you got by my having been sentenced to Newgate; this is the produce of that deed by which it was hoped and believed that I was pressed down, never to be able to stir again.' . . . This was a new epoch in the progress of my mind. I now bent my whole force to one object, regarding every thing else as of no consequence at all. The pursuits of agriculture and gardening filled up the moments of mere leisure and relaxation. Other topics than that of paper-money came now and then to make a variety; but this was the main thing; I never had any hope in anything else; and nothing else

was an object of my care. Whether I were rich or poor I cared not a straw. I never cared in my life how I ate, drank, or slept. I had Newgate in my recollection and the paper-money for my polar star."

Cobbett's imprisonment was not without its fruits: it shortened the life of the brutal practice of flogging, not only in England, but in the United States. "What came of it all?" says Mr. Edward Smith. "In the first place, before Mr. Cobbett was released, flogging had become so discredited as to be nearly in desuetude, as regards the British army. Secondly, the degrading practice was totally abolished in the United States army, by Act of Congress of April 10th, 1812."

While in prison, Cobbett was visited by a great number of persons, who regarded him as suffering in the cause of public liberty. During the two years, he was visited by persons, whom he had never seen before, from 197 cities and towns in England, Scotland, and Ireland, the larger number of whom came to him as the deputies of some society, club, or circle of people, in their respective places of residence. "I had the infinite satisfaction," he says, "to learn from the gentlemen who thus visited me, that my writings had induced those who had read them to think. This fact, indeed, of being visited by persons from almost every considerable town in the kingdom, speaks a language that cannot be misunderstood." Yet his enemies never ceased firing away at him, even in prison. He was annoyed by various squibs and satires; "one villain, whose name was Gillray," caricatured him standing before the bars of his jail.

His friends offered to raise a penny subscription for him in order to defray his expenses. This he refused, desiring them rather to buy the sets of his Register which he had still on hand. Few, however, availed themselves of this offer, as the sets were expensive, twenty-five and a half guineas each. He acted unwisely in refusing the

penny subscription, which would no doubt have been quite as successful as was that for his friend Lord Cochrane, and would probably have covered all his expenses, including the twelve hundred pounds to the jailer. Cobbett evidently disliked receiving money without giving any equivalent for it, and much preferred *selling his wares to receiving a gratuity*.

Thus the two years of his prison-life were spent in editing his paper, writing his book on paper-money, advocating measures of reform, exposing and denouncing his enemies and their measures, managing his farm, educating his children, and showing the kindest and gentlest attentions to all the members of his family, whose thoughts were only of him and of what would be pleasing to him. In public life he was exacting, severe, domineering; in private life kind, affable, indulgent. This man of battle, this undaunted fighter, who loved nothing better than a tussle with his enemies, who dared the whole power of the British government, and openly defied the prejudices of the people and the hostility of powerful ecclesiastical and political organizations, displayed a mindfulness of those whom he loved worthy of the gentlest nature. So regardful was he of his wife, who was constitutionally timid and especially afraid of thunder-storms, that whenever he saw a storm approaching while he was absent from home, he used to drop whatever he had in hand, and hasten home as fast as he could. So that his French friends used to say, when he made an appointment with one of them, and declared that he would be punctually on hand at a given time and place, "*Sauve le tonnerre, Monsieur Cobbett!*" (Except it thunders, Mr. Cobbett!) He speaks of his wife as "a companion who, though deprived of all opportunity of acquiring what is called learning, had so much good sense, so much useful knowledge, was so innocent, so just in all her ways, so

pure in thought, word, and deed, so disinterested, so generous, so devoted to me and her children, so free from all disguise, and, withal, so beautiful and so talkative, and in a voice so sweet, so cheering, that I must, seeing the health and the capacity which it had pleased God to give me, have been a *criminal*, if I had done much less than that which I have done; and I have always said, that if my country felt any gratitude for my labors, that gratitude is due to her, full as much as to me." How many men, in these days of divorces and matrimonial wrangles, can boast of such a wife? And how many wives can boast of such a husband, so mindful of them as to drop everything and make for home on the approach of a thunder-storm? One cannot help thinking of the circumstance, that the thoughts and feelings of this well-mated pair must have instinctively turned towards each other during every thunder-storm that occurred while the one was held fast within the strong walls of that terrible old Newgate prison.

## PART III.

FROM COBBETT'S RELEASE FROM NEWGATE, 1812, TILL HIS  
DEATH, 1835.

## CHAPTER I.

## HIS RETURN TO BOTLEY.

ON his liberation from prison, Cobbett was not a little gratified and consoled by the manner in which he was received by the people of Hampshire and his neighbors in Botley. At one of the towns on his way home, he was met by gentlemen who had come thirty miles to see him, and on his approach to Botley the young men drew him in his carriage for more than a mile. "When we got into Botley," he says, "about nine o'clock in the evening of the 11th of July, there was a sight for Sir Vicary Gibbs and Lord Ellenborough, and his brother judges, to see. The inhabitants of the village gathered round me; the young men, and the boys, and their fathers and mothers, listening to the account of the CAUSE of my absence; hearing me speak of the *local militia* and the *German troops* at the town of Ely; hearing me call upon fathers and mothers to reflect on what I said, and on their sons to bear it in mind to the last hour of their lives. In short, the thing ended precisely as it ought to end, in a plain appeal to the understanding of a village; to young country men and boys, and their fathers and mothers.

"To express my feelings on this occasion," he continues, "is quite impossible. Suffice it to say that the good behavior, the civility and kindness of all the



people of the village to my family during my absence, and their most affectionate reception of myself at my return, will never be effaced from my recollection. If I had wanted a motive to love my country, here would have been motive sufficient. That nation cannot be otherwise than good, where the inhabitants of a whole parish are so honest, so just and so kind. For my part, born and bred amongst the farmers and laborers of England, I have ever entertained towards them feelings of kindness; but I have now to add the feeling of gratitude, and of that feeling I shall, I hope, never fail to give proof, when it is in my power to defend any of my poorer neighbors against the oppressions of the more powerful."

We shall see that this was not a vain promise, but was repeatedly fulfilled to the letter in his subsequent career.

Whenever there are two statements, one by Cobbett and another by somebody else, even by an enemy, Mr. Watson prefers the latter. After quoting the above account of his reception at Botley, he gives us a story of a different kind from the *Times*, the "bloody old *Times*," as Cobbett used to call it, which was always dead against him. The hostile spirit of this account is apparent on the face of it. The *Times*' reporter asserts that Cobbett's agent had, some days previous to his return, endeavored to stir up the rustics by announcing that four half hogsheads of ale would be given away when he came back; that this agent endeavored to get the church-bells rung, but was refused the keys of the church by the rector; that the young men would not have drawn the carriage if it were not for the promised ale, for the sake of which they *took on themselves the character of beasts*; that some of the rector's party declared they did not know which had more of the beast, those who dragged or he who was dragged; that the procession was composed of persons of the *lowest* character; that Cobbett made a speech, upon which his agent and his followers, *athirst for the ale*, shouted;

that the affair ended with a riot—what we should probably call a revel or a spree—which lasted till Sunday morning, and to which the constables were compelled to put an end.

Now anybody can see the animus of the writer of this account; and yet Mr. Watson, comparing it with Cobbett's, says, it "made his entrance into Botley appear of another character, *which has generally been thought much nearer the truth.*" Generally been *thought*? By whom? By Mr. Watson, by his enemies, by the government people, and the *Times* people, who never missed an opportunity to ridicule and pervert and travesty everything he said or did. One cannot help saying to Mr. Watson something like what the little judge said to Sam Weller: "You must not tell us what you or anybody else thought, sir; it is not EVIDENCE." How groundless are Mr. Watson's charges! and how evident it is, that his aim was to undermine Cobbett's character and destroy all confidence in his words!

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## CHAPTER II.

### A FALSE STEP AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

COBBETT's friends celebrated his liberation by a dinner at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, at which Sir Francis Burdett presided. There were six hundred persons present at this dinner, most of them the liberal, progressive, reforming spirits of the day. But there were some other spirits of a different character: the government still had their eyes on him, and sent their emissaries there; and the *Times*, which was hand in glove with the government, had its emissaries there too.

"At the tavern-door," says Mr. Watson, "as the guests entered, handbills were delivered to them, referring them

to a letter in the *Times*, signed, 'A Fellow-Sufferer from unjust Persecution,' in which various charges were made against Cobbett's political conduct and general dealings with his supporters and the public. It was there shown how he had formerly censured and ridiculed Sir Francis Burdett, whom he was now praising and flattering; and how he had contradicted himself on other subjects. It was shown that, after having made a large sum of money by his Register, and being in possession of ample means to pay his fine, he had sought to elicit unnecessary contributions from his readers and supporters, endeavoring to force on them the purchase of surplus copies of that publication by the sale of which he had already so largely profited. It was also charged that, at the time of his last trial, between the day of his conviction and that of pronouncing the judgment, he had made an offer to the government to discontinue his Register, on condition that he should be pardoned; and it was only because this offer had no effect that he continued to publish the Register.

"When his health was drunk as 'an able advocate of parliamentary reform, and zealous opposer of the flogging system,' Cobbett had to make a speech. He dwelt at much length on what he had suffered from the prosecution. His change of tone with regard to Sir Francis Burdett he justified on many grounds which he had discovered for altering his opinions respecting that honorable baronet and the principles which he advocated. As to discontinuing the Register, he had contemplated doing so, he said, because he was afraid of being unable to write with the freedom which he had previously exercised, and was unwilling to address the public in a lower strain.—But there was a party in the room whom these observations did not satisfy. One of the company, who did not give his name at first, but afterwards said it was Collier, remarked that Cobbett had made no specific answer to the two principal charges against him; first, that he 'had

unworthily and indirectly attempted to raise a sum of money from the public, to defray the expenses of his trial, when the public had already aided him fully to sustain them;’ and, secondly, that he had offered to discontinue his Register for the purpose of inducing the Court of King’s Bench to mitigate the sentence about to be passed upon him.’ His object was, he said, to ascertain from Mr. Cobbett, by his direct contradiction of these accusations, that he still continued true to the cause of the people. Cobbett replied that it was unfair to charge him with endeavoring to procure money by unworthy means merely because he had, when living at an extraordinary expense, offered his own property for sale; and that as to discontinuing the Register, he had never made any such proposition to the government as that which was imputed to him, nor had he ever received any such proposition from the government; nor had he ever had a thought of ceasing to write on any such condition as that which had been mentioned. This declaration was followed by a great uproar, some applauding Cobbett and some decrying him; and it is certain that a large portion of the company still remained unconvinced by his protestations. The truth is, that his censors had got hold of a copy of an address ‘To the Readers of the Register,’ which he had actually written and printed for insertion in it, at the time of his conviction, stating, that the number in which it would appear would be the last. The motives there intimated for the discontinuance of the Register were such as he alleged in his speech at the dinner; but the authors of the handbills circulated against him declared that he did not write the address till he erroneously thought he had made his peace with Ministers.”

Does not all this look as if Cobbett had got into a court to try him for dishonorable practices, instead of a company of friends to compliment him for honorable ones? The whole thing seems to have been a trap, care-

fully set to catch him; for he certainly had more enemies than friends at this dinner, and enemies, too, of the most despicable character. Could there be anything more meanly treacherous than this delivery of hostile handbills into the hands of the guests as they entered the door? What should we think of people who, at a dinner given to Mr. Evarts, or Mr. Schurz, slipped handbills containing hostile and damaging statements concerning them into the hands of the friends they were about to meet? Even the Tweed gang could hardly have done anything more contemptibly base. It is on a par with the whole conduct of the government of that day; a sneaking, conscienceless crew, who feared Cobbett, and scrupled at no means, however base, of injuring him.

Unfortunately, one of these statements concerning Cobbett was, it seems, true; and although in itself the fact which he denied was by no means dishonorable, he made a grave mistake, nay he acted very wrongly, unwisely, and unfairly in denying it. I refer to the accusation of his having offered the government to discontinue his paper in exchange for his freedom. It is obvious from the above account of his speeches at this dinner, that he never *intended* denying it (for he, at the outset, frankly confesses having contemplated discontinuing the Register) until his accuser or cross-questioner twisted it into a *test* as to whether he still remained faithful to the cause of the people or not; whereupon Cobbett, taken suddenly and without a moment for reflection, fell into the trap set for him. No doubt he had never intended to surrender to the government; and that is what he meant to say; but the offer to discontinue his paper in exchange for his liberty was a fact.

The charge was subsequently repeated by others, and he denied it again in his letter to Mr. Rose in 1817. What *did* take place just before he was brought up for judgment, he relates as follows in that letter: "The

grounds of the charge are as follows: a few days before I was brought up for judgment I went home to pass the remaining short space of personal freedom with my family. I had just begun farming, and also planting trees, with the hope of seeing them grow up as my children grew. I had a daughter fifteen years of age, whose birthday was just then approaching—and, destined to be one of the happiest and one of the most unhappy days of my life—on that day my dreadful sentence was passed. I had one son eleven years old, another nine years old, another six years old; one daughter five years old, another three years old, and another child nearly at hand. You and Perceval might have laughed at all this; it was your turn to laugh then; but the public will easily believe that, under the apprehensions of an absence of years, and the great chance of loss of health, if not of life, in a prison, all this produced nothing like laughter at Botley. It was at this crisis, no matter by what feelings actuated, that I wrote to my attorney, Mr. White, in Essex street, to make the proposition above stated. But fits of fear and despair have never been of long duration in my family. The letter was hardly got to the post-office at Southampton before the courage of my wife and eldest daughter returned. Indignation and resentment took the place of grief and alarm, and they cheerfully consented to my stopping the letter. Mr. Peter Finnerty was at my house at the time; a post-chaise was got, and he came off to London during the night, and *prevented Mr. White from acting on the letter.* . . . Now Mr. Finnerty, whom I have not had the pleasure to see for some years, is alive and in London. Mr. White is also alive. The public will be sure that I should not dare to have made the above statement if it had not been true to the very letter.”

But it seems that he made another offer, through another person, after this countermanded one; and although

it came out eight years afterwards, I must here dispose of it at once. Cobbett had an assistant and partner in his printing and publishing business, a gentleman named Wright, who had been with him for many years. When Cobbett had to go to prison, a division of their property became necessary. Cobbett disputed Wright's demands; an accountant was consulted, and (according to Mr. Watson) this accountant reduced a claim of Cobbett's of twelve thousand pounds to six. This created a mortal enmity between the two; Cobbett attacked Wright at different times, and in 1820 that gentleman brought suit against him for various libelous utterances concerning him. Wright recovered a thousand pounds damages and forty shillings costs, which sum, as Cobbett at that time had lost nearly every penny he possessed, was paid by that excellent man who had been so friendly to him while in prison—Mr. George Rogers, of Southampton. The name of such a friend is well worthy of remembrance. In this suit, it was shown that, in the interval between the conviction and the passing of sentence (15th of June till 9th of July, 1810), Cobbett had written to Mr. John Reeves of the Alien office—the same gentleman who presented his "Important Considerations" to the government in 1803—requesting him to treat with the government for the discontinuance of the Register on condition of a pardon being granted. He also sent to Mr. Reeves a statement of his claims for indulgence and a copy of a farewell address to the public on laying down the Register. His offer was refused. Mr. Perceval would not listen to anything short of imprisonment; so Cobbett wrote to Mr. Wright to suppress the farewell address and to go on with the Register.\*

This was the address which his enemies at the Crown and Anchor had got hold of, and which Cobbett thought

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\* Watson's Biography of Cobbett, p. 339.

was furnished to them and the *Times* by the treachery of Wright. They may have got it from one of the ministers; but it matters little from whom they got it; what we have to consider is the denial of the fact itself, which caused Cobbett great annoyance, great loss of reputation, and great damage in every way.

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### CHAPTER III.

CONFESSION THE ONLY SALVATION.—THE CLERGYMAN AND THE STATESMAN.

It is remarkable that so able a man could not see that there was much more danger in denying than in confessing his error, if it may be called such. The only disgrace was in the denial; the act was not disgraceful; nor would sensible people have thought less of him if he had confessed the truth. Let us suppose him to have said: "Yes, gentlemen, it is true, I did this thing; and after I have told you why, you will not perhaps consider it such a villainous transaction as some of you now seem to do. With my printing and publishing and farming enterprises all threatened with ruin; with my helpless little ones all clinging to me as if they were never to see me again, and lamenting as if their hearts would break—for I had been their friend and teacher as well as their bread-winner—with my wife in a very delicate state of health; with a whole houseful of people entirely dependent on me; with the prospects of the loss of the fruits of all my labor for years, and of being hurried away from all that was dear to me in the world and shut up among felons; with all this before me, is it astonishing that I should have made an attempt, a perfectly fair and honorable attempt, to escape such a fate? What did I do? I offered to give



up my paper; not my principles. Had I not a right to do this? Was there anything dishonest or base in this? I was under no obligation to continue to write; I had always given my subscribers their money's worth, and I would not have allowed them to lose a farthing. The country had done nothing for me. I was in no way bound to sacrifice myself and family if I could avoid it. I was in the state of a soldier surrounded by an irresistible enemy; and has a soldier so situated ever been ashamed to ask his life, and to accept of it, upon the conditions of not serving again during the war?" Had he spoken thus, as he subsequently did, in effect, in his letter to Mr. Rose, would any sensible man have condemned him for his act? But the fact is, as I have above indicated, he seems to have been taken unawares, to have fallen into a trap expressly laid for him, and committed an error, which even he, strong man as he was, was afterward ashamed to confess.

The confession of a fault, instead of degrading, *raises* the confessor of it in the estimation of his fellow-men. While it requires courage and manliness to confess a fault, it is an indication of cowardice and weakness to deny it. I am convinced that in the case, for instance, of two celebrated Americans, the one an eloquent and distinguished clergyman, once admired and esteemed by the whole nation as perhaps its greatest representative pulpit-orator; the other an able statesman and effective speaker; a man who had been honored with almost the highest offices in the gift of the people, and who had enjoyed almost universal respect and popularity; I am convinced that in the case of these two men,—both of whom have been tried for crime, and acquitted in a peculiar manner, yet both of whom are supposed by the world in general to be guilty,—I am confident that the whole world would, had they frankly confessed their sin on the day of trial, forgiven them for the sake of the frankness and manliness

of the confession; and instead of remaining forever under a cloud, and being universally regarded with distrust and suspicion; instead of having the finger of scorn constantly pointed at them, and being a standing target for scoffers and satirists, they would, I think, be regarded with indulgent and not unkindly feelings by the majority of their countrymen, and perhaps trusted as much as they had ever been before. And from what oceans of misery, "regret, remorse, and shame," the men themselves would have been saved, had they in the first instance told the plain, simple truth!

Cobbett, however, had committed no *crime* in offering to discontinue his paper; the offer was perfectly harmless in itself; his offence was in the denying of the offer. It was a blunder, a criminal blunder, if you please; but it is evident that, in making the statement he did, he never could have intended uttering a deliberate falsehood, a falsehood by which no possible advantage could be gained, nor any good of any kind secured to himself or others; a falsehood so completely senseless and aimless that none but a fool could have intentionally committed it. The tenor of Cobbett's whole life prevents us from supposing him guilty of a deliberate falsehood; and in this case, it seems evident that he was, in the heat and excitement of the moment, simply entrapped into making a statement which was not true, or not strictly true, and he foolishly stuck to it, having once made it. His conduct, therefore, was weak, erroneous, blameworthy, seriously blameworthy; but it was not of that black nature characteristic of a man of falsehood; it was not so terribly black as Mr. Watson makes it. It hurt nobody but himself; it was indeed disastrous to his own reputation; for it caused him much trouble, vexation, and loss of friends, and became a standing reproach to him for the rest of his life. Like all deviations from the straight line of rectitude, the evil consequences fell mainly upon himself.

The chief use of biography is to learn wisdom from the blunders, the errors, and foibles of others; and the lesson to be learned from this episode in the life of Cobbett is, especially to the young, a very important one: that a falsehood of any kind is a fatal error; that we must never, under any circumstances, deviate from the simple, plain truth; that we must never allow ourselves to be even *entrapped* into a lie; and that we must ever scorn falsehood, as mean and contemptible; ever

“Dare to be true, for nothing can need a lie:  
A fault which needs it most, grows *two* thereby.”

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## CHAPTER IV.

THE UNHAPPY YEAR 1817.—SILENCE, A DUNGEON, OR EXILE.

COBBETT now became doubly active, and sought every possible means of defeating the measures and exposing the injustice and tyranny of the ministry that had shown him so little mercy. It was something he never forgot or forgave; something which he told wherever and whenever he thought it suitable; something the authors of which he held up to contempt and execration on all occasions. He reduced the price of his Register, and called into existence his famous TWOPENNY TRASH; a name given by Lord Castlereagh to his cheap newspapers, and which, like the significant name given him in America, he immediately adopted. He became so busy issuing various books and publications, that, as he himself maintained, the government actually passed a law, or a number of laws, called the Six Acts, in order to reach and silence him. “The idea of publishing cheap newspapers under the title of TWOPENNY TRASH,” says Sir Henry Bulwer, “and which, not appearing as periodicals, escaped the

Stamp Act, now added considerably to his power, and by extending the circulation of his writings to a new class,—the mechanic and artisan in urban populations,—made that power dangerous at a period when great distress produced general discontent—a discontent of which the government rather tried to suppress the exhibition than to remove the causes. Nor did Cobbett speak untruly when he said, that the suspension of the Habeas Corpus and the passing of the celebrated Six Acts were more directed against himself than against all the other writers of sedition put together.”

This was the unhappy year 1817—a year marked by extreme misery and distress among the people, and consequently by riots and disturbances, and by all manner of unwise repressive measures on the part of the government. The ruling class, the aristocracy and the fundholders, now dreaded a rising of their own countrymen more seriously than they ever dreaded an invasion of the French, and thought their only safety lay in extreme measures of repression and restriction. So that, to use Cobbett’s words, “with a press under the superintendence of the magistrates; with an old treason bill revived; with the Habeas Corpus Act suspended in time of profound peace; with legions of paupers, and millions in a state of starvation; with commerce, manufactures, and agriculture ruined; with all these notoriously existing,” the weak and cowardly government of the day could find no cure for existing evils but repression and restriction. They hated the Reformers, whom they foolishly looked upon as the originators of the disturbances and discontents in the country, and the cause of all the evils they had to fear; and it was in order to get *them* into their power, that they had the Habeas Corpus Act suspended.

As soon as this Act was suspended, and the Six Acts were passed, Cobbett saw plainly that he would have to make up his mind to accept of one of three evils: *silence*,

a *dungeon*, or *exile*. Unfortunately, he chose the last; he made up his mind to take up his residence, for a time, in a country where he could enjoy freedom of speech and of action, and from which he intended to transmit, if possible, his thoughts to England for publication. Had the Atlantic telegraph been in existence at that time, his plan would no doubt have been altogether successful; but with no quicker means of conveying his thoughts to England than by slow-going sailing-vessels, it could not be other than a failure; for his thoughts came too late; he was striking the iron after it had cooled. With his views, he would, I think, have done far better to have gone over to France or to Holland.

Like the German Socialists lately landed on our shores, driven from their native land by the gagging laws of Bismarck, Cobbett was driven out by the gagging bills of Castlereagh and Sidmouth, who were determined to suppress hostile criticisms by every means in their power. Had he remained, imprisonment would certainly have been his fate; for he never could have held his tongue while witnessing the boundless folly and cruelty of the actions of these men. The Constitution of England may be summed up thus: "Everything is allowed; except the following;" while these wise statesmen were doing their utmost to make it like that of Prussia, which may be summed up thus: "Everything is *forbidden*; except the following."

So, after writing a farewell address to the people of England, which he dictated on the evening before his departure, at the Register office in London, and in which he gives all his reasons for the step he was taking, he left London for Liverpool at five o'clock on the morning of the 22d of March, 1817, and on the 27th took passage on board of an American vessel bound for New York. He was accompanied by his two sons, William and John, and made arrangements for the remainder of his family

to follow him in the autumn. He reached New York May 5th, 1817, after a voyage of forty days.

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## CHAPTER V.

### COBBETT'S TAKING LEAVE OF HIS COUNTRYMEN.

THIS was such an important step in his career; its results were so serious, financially as well as politically; his reasons for it have been so strongly disputed, and his assertions concerning it so positively denied; that I consider it necessary, first, to let him give his own account of the matter, and then notice what Mr. Watson considers "the true reasons for his *escape* to America." In the farewell address above alluded to, he thus describes his position:

"MY BELOVED COUNTRYMEN,—Soon after this reaches your eyes, those of the writer will, possibly, have taken the last glimpse of the land that gave them birth, the land in which his parents lie buried, the land of which he has always been so proud, the land in which he leaves a people whom he shall, to his last breath, love and esteem beyond all the rest of mankind.

"Everyone, if he can do it without wrong to another, has a right to pursue the path to his own happiness; as my happiness, however, has long been inseparable from the hope of assisting in restoring the rights and liberties of my country, nothing could have induced me to quit that country while there remained the smallest chance of my being able, by remaining, to continue to aid her cause. No such chance is now left. The laws which have just been passed, especially if we take into view the real objects of those laws, forbid us to entertain the idea, that it would be possible to write on political subjects according

to the dictates of truth and reason, without drawing down on our heads certain and swift destruction. It was well observed by Mr. Brougham, in a late debate, that every writer who opposes the present measures 'must now feel that he sits down to write with *a halter about his neck*,'—an observation the justice of which must be obvious to all the world.

“Leaving, therefore, all considerations of personal interest, personal feeling, and personal safety; leaving even the peace of mind of a numerous and most affectionate family wholly out of view, I have reasoned thus with myself. What is now left to be done? We have urged our claims with so much truth; we have established them so clearly on the ground of both law and reason, that there is no answer to be found other than that of a *suspension of our personal safety*. If I still write in support of those claims, I must be blind not to see that a dungeon is my doom. If I write at all, and do not write in support of those claims, I not only degrade myself, but I do a great injury to the rights of the nation by appearing to abandon them. If I remain here, I must therefore *cease to write*, either from compulsion or from a sense of duty to my countrymen; therefore, it is *impossible* to do any good to the cause of my country by remaining in it; but, if I remove to a country where I can write with perfect freedom, it is not only *possible*, but very *probable*, that I shall, sooner or later, be able to render that cause important and lasting services.

“Upon this conclusion it is that I have made my determination; for though life would be scarcely worth preserving with the consciousness that I walked about my fields, or slept in my bed, merely at the mercy of a Secretary of State; though, under such circumstances, neither the song of the birds in spring nor the well-strawed homestead in winter could make me forget that I and my rising family were slaves, still there is something so

powerful in the thought of country, and neighborhood, and home, and friends; there is something so strong in the numerous and united ties with which these and endless other objects fasten the mind to a long-inhabited spot, that to tear one's self away nearly approaches to the separating of the soul from the body. But, then, on the other hand, when I asked myself—'What! shall I submit in silence? Shall I be as dumb as one of my horses? Shall that indignation which burns within me be quenched? Shall I make no effort to preserve even the *chance* of assisting to better the lot of my unhappy country? Shall that mind which has communicated its light and warmth to millions of other minds now be extinguished for ever; and shall those who, with thousands of pens at their command, still saw the tide of opinion rolling more and more heavily against them, now be for ever secure from that pen, by the efforts of which they feared being overwhelmed? Shall truth never again be uttered? Shall her voice never again be heard, even from a distant shore?'

"Thus was the balance turned; and, my countrymen, be you well assured that though I shall, if I live, be at a distance from you; though the ocean will roll between us, not all the barriers which nature as well as art can raise shall be sufficient to prevent you from reading some part, at least, of what I write; and, notwithstanding all the wrongs of which I justly complain; notwithstanding all the indignation that I feel; notwithstanding all the provocations that I have received, or that I may receive, never shall there drop from my pen anything which, according to the *laws of the land*, I might not safely write and publish in England. Those who have felt themselves supported by power have practised foul play towards me without measure, but though I shall have the means of retaliation in my hands, never will I follow their base example."



And then, further on, with reference to the suspension of the writ of Habeas Corpus, he says: "I do not retire from a combat with the Attorney-General, but from a combat with a dungeon, *deprived of pen, ink, and paper*. A combat with the Attorney-General is quite *unequal* enough. That, however, I would have encountered. I know too well what a trial by *special jury* is. Yet that, or any sort of *trial*, I would have stayed to face. So that I could have been sure of a *trial* of whatever sort, I would have run the risk. But, against the absolute power of imprisonment without even a *hearing*, for time unlimited, in any jail in the kingdom, without the use of pen, ink, and paper, and without any communication with any soul but the keepers; against *such a power* it would have been worse than madness to attempt to strive. Indeed, there could have been no *striving* in a case where I should have been as much at the disposal of the Secretary of State as are the shoes which he has upon his feet. No! I shall go where I shall not be as the shoes upon Lord Sidmouth's and Lord Castlereagh's feet. I will go where I can make *sure* of the use of pen, ink, and paper; and these two Lords may be equally sure that in spite of everything that they can do, unless they openly enact or proclaim a *censorship* of the press, or cut off all commercial communication with America, you, my good and faithful countrymen, shall be able to read what I write."

## CHAPTER VI.

MR. WATSON'S CHARGE.—SIR FRANCIS BURDETT AND HIS LOAN.

AFTER quoting part of this address, Mr. Watson says: "It is unpleasant to find that this statement, so plausibly set forth, does not contain the full or even the true reasons for his escape to America. There was another, the strongest of all, to which he makes no allusion. Hitherto the reader may have seen cause to conceive of him as a thriving and prosperous man. He had made money in America, and, notwithstanding his losses through his libel on Rush, he had brought home sufficient to start him, as it seemed, in a fair way of business in London. He had been receiving, some time before his departure, a profit of fifteen hundred pounds a year, as he tells us, from his Register alone; and he was 'turning,' as the mercantile expression is, twenty thousand a year by his various publications. He had saved enough, as early as 1806, to get into his hands the estate at Botley, of the value of forty thousand pounds; and he seems to have lived there, as a farmer, comfortably but not extravagantly. He was therefore considered, by a large portion of the public, to be in excellent pecuniary circumstances. But he had no sooner embarked on the Atlantic than it became known to everybody that he was deeply sunk in debt. The great cause of his encumbrances appears to have been reckless ventures in printing and publishing." Then, after speaking of what speculations he seems to have made; of his PROBABLE losses in establishing the Parliamentary History, Parliamentary Debates, and State Trials; of his endeavors to establish a branch business in America, where he had sent his nephew for that purpose; of his having mortgaged his estate for two-fifths the purchase-money, and of his having got into debt with the tradesmen with

whom he was connected, Mr. Watson quotes an "authentic list" of his debts furnished to a writer in the *Quarterly Review*, amounting in all to £36,000, and then adds: "He had, therefore, other reasons for leaving England besides fear of the suspension of the Act of Habeas Corpus."

All this looks very bad for Cobbett; indeed it seems quite staggering at first sight. But there is another side to the story; there are one or two very essential items left out of Mr. Watson's calculation; and when these are considered, it will be found that the case is not nearly so bad as he represents it. It has been shown what Mr. Cobbett's *debts* amounted to, and an estimate is made of his income; but no proper statement has been made of his *assets*, of the value of his *real property* as well as his *literary property*, the profits from the latter alone, with Cobbett at the head of it, were amply sufficient to provide him a livelihood and pay his debts. Cobbett himself declares, in his letter to Mr. John Hayes, that he was worth £70,000, and I think it can be shown he was not wrong in this statement.

In one of the first letters he wrote from America he speaks of having left behind him a farm covered with stock of all sorts; a home full of furniture; an estate which, with its improvements, had cost him £40,000, and which was mortgaged for less than £17,000; copyrights worth an immense sum, and a current income from his writings of more than ten thousand pounds.

In the first place, accepting the reviewer's statement as correct, it appears that about nine-tenths of his debts were owing to eleven persons or firms, from one of whom he had borrowed sixteen thousand pounds "on an estate of the value of forty thousand pounds," which estate, it will be observed, he had saved enough to purchase as early as 1806. Sixteen thousand on an estate of the value of forty thousand is not a heavy encumbrance. Now if it is true

that he was earning ten thousand a year from his various publications, was he not making enough to meet his liabilities? Would we, in this country, consider a man of frugal habits, with an estate worth forty thousand, an income of ten thousand a year, and a debt of thirty-six thousand, in an insolvent condition? Could anything be more preposterous? But it will be said we have only Cobbett's assertion for this statement of his income. There are, however, other circumstances that tend to prove the truth of his words.

It is well known that his publications sold immensely; he was perhaps, after his liberation from prison, more widely known, and his writings were more extensively read than those of any other man in Britain, excepting perhaps those of Sir Walter Scott. Of his Address to the Journey-men and Laborers of England, for instance, 200,000 copies were sold, when he allowed everybody to print it. And it must be borne in mind he was both *publisher* and *author* of all his writings; so that he had not only the lion's share of the profits, but the other share too, whatever that may be called. Even after he was gone, those which he sent to England had a very large sale; witness his little English Grammar, which he wrote in Long Island, and transmitted to his son for publication; of this work ten thousand copies were sold in the first month.

The bare fact of his having saved the greater part of forty thousand pounds as early as 1806 shows how profitable his business must have been, and what a large sale he must have had for his writings. It is indeed amazing to observe what a height of prosperity he had attained by means of his strong pen. About a score of years previous to this, he was an under-officer in the army with eighteen pence a day; now, he was one of the most powerful and popular writers in the kingdom with an income of ten thousand pounds (fifty thousand dollars) a year! The Six Acts were passed, in fact, to reach him *because* of the

enormous sale and wide-spread influence of his writings. He was really the leader, the spokesman of the *masses* of the English people. Nor did he express revolutionary or seditious sentiments, or incite the people to forcible resistance to the government. All he wanted was a reform of Parliament and a rectification of abuses. In his Address to the Journeymen and Laborers he shows that labor is the foundation of all wealth; that the people therefore (whom the Tory papers called the swinish multitude) are the creators of that wealth; that riots and attacks on butchers and bakers and brewers are unjust and foolish; that complaints at lowering wages and the economizing efforts of employers, who themselves are often even worse off than the employed, are equally foolish; and that the real cause of all their miseries lay in the enormous load of taxation, which could be removed only by a *reformed Parliament*.

Till the passage of the Six Acts, Cobbett was therefore not only solvent but prosperous; his income was large and his manner of living frugal; even Mr. Watson allows that he was not extravagant. Hence there is every reason to believe that he could easily have satisfied his creditors had he been left unmolested. What justice then is there in the assertion that he ran away to escape his creditors? for that is what Mr. Watson's words mean. It is clearly false that he fled on account of having brought commercial ruin on himself; for never did his writings sell more extensively, never were his talents more in demand or more richly rewarded; never was his income larger than at this time.

I have been told of a German political agitator of 1848 who, after suffering close confinement for years in an Austrian dungeon, was asked, long after his release, to join some young men in a liberal movement for the benefit of his country. Although the enterprise was not unlawful, or immediately dangerous, he constantly refused, saying, "*They have never been in a dungeon!*"

In this case, the man's spirit was completely crushed; all power of resistance was pressed entirely out of him, and he became the living representation of what all tyrants want their subjects to be. Although Cobbett had felt and seen the terrible power of the British Government; although the iron had entered his soul, and he had felt it terribly; he came out as bright and plucky, strong and aggressive as ever. Yet, although he had not succumbed to this power, it is evident he dreaded a repetition of its exercise, especially in an intensified form; for this time, under the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, it would be *close confinement*, and for a *longer period*; and close confinement means imprisonment *without pen, paper, and ink*, and *with no communication with anybody but the keepers*; a fate almost as terrible as that of his favorite author, poor Dean Swift, who, in mental darkness, passed the last three years of his life in complete silence in the hands of keepers. Is it any wonder that Cobbett dreaded such a fate? Except absolute torture on the wheel, nothing more terrible can be conceived. This was what the remorseless Castlereagh and his aids had in store for him; this was what they wished to bring him to; and could Castlereagh have once got him behind bolts and bars under these conditions; could he have once succeeded, by this terrible confinement, in destroying his reason and turning him into a raving maniac, I have not a doubt but he would have crept down from his high tower and slipped into the prison, in order to feast his eyes with a sight of his once dreaded, but now helpless and ruined enemy; I have not a doubt but he would, like James I. with the tortured Covenanters, have stood complacently looking at him while others moved away, unable longer to endure the sight.

Had Mr. Watson experienced a two-years' confinement under lock and key, within sight and smell of all that is hateful and criminal, he would perhaps have found Cob-

bett's reasons for departing quite sufficient and satisfactory without seeking any other; he would perhaps have had a little feeling for the man who had had "a midsummer night's dream" in Newgate such as he did not wish to have repeated.

If Cobbett remained at his post, he had to fear imprisonment by the government; if he announced publicly that he was going away, he had to fear imprisonment or detention by his creditors; for the value of his property depended entirely upon his presence at the head of it; and if he left the country secretly, he had to fear the loss of everything but his liberty. Then, again, if he remained at his post, he would feel either that he was writing in shackles or in constant fear of prosecution; or, escaping prosecution, he would be apt to incur the contempt and neglect of his countrymen. In this perplexing dilemma, he made up his mind that he would, at any rate, secure his personal liberty—compared with which, loss of fortune was not to be considered for a moment—and while doing what he could for his own country, begin life anew in a foreign but free country. In this determination he probably erred; but if so, who can blame him?

In regard to Sir Francis Burdett and Cobbett's debt to him, Sir Henry Bulwer thinks that as the money was advanced to a political partisan, the lender could scarcely have expected it to be repaid; yet the wealthy baronet, "having advanced it to a political partisan, was not altogether pleased at seeing his money and his partisan slip through his fingers at the same time; and made some remarks which, on reaching Cobbett's ears, aroused a vanity that never slept, and was only too ready to avenge itself by abuse equally ungrateful and unwise." The amount of Cobbett's indebtedness to Sir Francis was £4000. In the above-mentioned letter to Mr. John Hayes, who was, in 1819, imprisoned for ten weeks for ringing a bell announcing Cobbett's return to England, Cobbett

refers to Sir Francis in these words: "Let him hug himself in the thought that the seventy thousand pounds earned with my pen have been squeezed from me and my family by those various Acts of Oppression and Fraud, which afforded him the occasion to promulgate through the newspapers, as soon as my back was turned, an insinuation that I had decamped on account of a debt, the very existence of which he was bound in honor to keep secret." This, then, was the cause of Cobbett's estrangement from Sir Francis. It is evident, from this sentence, that the money advanced by Sir Francis was something like election expenses, a sum advanced for the purpose of promoting the interests of THE PARTY, and consequently, of the LEADER of that party. Deducting, therefore, this so-called debt and the amount of his mortgage, the latter requiring merely payment of interest at stated periods, there remained only £16,000 requiring payment of principal and interest at a stipulated definite time, which, it is plain, would, with the handsome income he had at this time, have been easily paid, had the government not interfered with him. So much for Mr. Watson's terrible-looking indictment.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### COBBETT'S SECOND RESIDENCE IN AMERICA.—HIS CHANGED SENTIMENTS REGARDING THE UNITED STATES.

"So long as a man pays his bills," says Sir Henry Bulwer, "or sticks to his party, he has some one to speak in his favor; but a runaway from his party and his debts, whatever the circumstances that lead to his doing either, must give up the idea of leaving behind him any one disposed to say a word in his defence." So that, no sooner



was Cobbett known to be gone, than a hue and cry of desertion of the party, of running away from his creditors, of bankruptcy, ruin, and what not, was set up, all of which had the most damaging effect on his reputation. And all his publications became valueless ; for he had been the life and soul of them all, and without his name they were like the play of Hamlet without Hamlet himself.

Cobbett took up his residence in Long Island, where he rented a farm, called Hyde Park Farm. He had made up his mind that he would apply "to the earth, to the untaxed earth," for a living. It would be affectation for him to pretend, he says, that he could not get a living by his pen ; but it was his intention to be a downright farmer, and to depend solely upon what he could do in that way for a living. His choice, not an unwise one, shows the simplicity of his character and the fewness of his wants ; but I cannot help thinking that if he had devoted less attention to digging and delving, and more to studying and reflecting ; if he had at this time stored his mind with the lessons and knowledge derived from extensive study of general history and literature, he would not have fallen into those gross and ridiculous errors into which he subsequently fell, and the latter part of his life might have been as felicitous, as bright and brilliant as his early career. Here he should have seen, read, studied, listened, and remembered. Here was his chance to supply the only thing in which he was lacking, knowledge, to make him more than a match for the ablest of his adversaries. Had he done this ; had he studied rather than digged, he would never have adopted the raw, extravagant theories which he shortly afterwards broached, and he would have returned to the onslaught like a man refreshed with new wine and furnished with new and superior armor. Some may say it was too late ; he was too old to study. Nay, it is never too late to learn ; never too late to acquire wisdom. Think of the historian Ranke beginning

his studies for a new history of the world at eighty-one; and now, in his eighty-fifth year, issuing the third volume of it! To every successful public man study is the very life of him, the very breath of his nostrils.

The first requisite of success for a literary man is fortune, or at least sufficient means to live in comfort independently of his pen. Without this, he cannot have the leisure, the books, the means of seeing and procuring all those things that pertain to a life of culture; he cannot have the independence of mind and the calmness of judgment necessary to produce anything worth reading, anything of real value. Had Milton been obliged to write for bread, he would never have produced *Paradise Lost*; had Fielding not had an income independent of his pen, he would never have created *Tom Jones*; had Buckle been poor, he would never have written his *History of Civilization*; had Macaulay not made a fortune in India, he would never have composed his *History of England*; and had Cobbett, when he did acquire a fortune, devoted more time to study and reflection, he would have produced a *History of the Reformation* of an entirely different character from that which he did produce. That history is now read by few except fast-bound Romanists, and even they cannot fail to see the worthlessness of the judgments it pronounces.

To be able to read and study a great deal, one needs more than *one* pair of eyes; secretaries, assistants are necessary, to read and condense, to search, to write to dictation, to seek out books, to translate; for one single *mind* can digest all that the *eyes* of a dozen men can supply. To do these things, one must have leisure and means, and unfortunately Cobbett had at this time not much of either; nor was he ever very solicitous about the *acquisition* of means, which procure leisure. Because many distinguished men have been poor, some think poverty meritorious; it is a common thing to hear

people say it is nothing to be ashamed of; but I am rather inclined to think, with Horace Greeley, that, in this country, it is something to be ashamed of; for, in nine cases out of ten, it is an evidence of want of capacity, want of industry, or want of self-denial. It is meritorious to save; because every penny saved means so much self-denial, so much leisure for culture and travel, so much ability to help every good cause.

Cobbett's contributions to the Register were regularly sent over by every packet; but, as has been observed, they came too late; the interest was gone before they arrived; and they fell, to use Mr. Watson's expressive simile, like shot fired after a battle.

His intentions at this time, his feelings towards his native land, and his changed sentiments towards the land of his adoption, towards the republican government and republican people he had formerly so savagely assailed, are displayed in the following extract from the first of a series of papers which he sent over, entitled, "A History of the Last Hundred Days of English Freedom." The small-capitals are mine:

"There are persons here, who will think well of no Englishman who will not distinctly and explicitly disclaim all allegiance to the king, or all regard for his country. I will do neither. I owe allegiance to the king as much as any American owes allegiance to the laws of his country. I cannot, if I would, according to the laws of England, get rid of it. And as to my country and my countrymen, my attachment to them can never be equaled by my attachment to any other country or people. I owe a temporary allegiance to this country, and am bound to obey ITS EXCELLENT LAWS AND GOVERNMENT. I am even bound to assist in repelling my own countrymen, and to consider them enemies, if they attack this country. All this I owe, in return for the protection I receive. I owe, besides, great gratitude to THIS SENSIBLE AND BRAVE PEOPLE,

and to THEIR WISE, GENTLE, AND JUST GOVERNMENT, for having preserved from the fangs of despotism this one spot of the globe. I owe to them my freedom at this moment. I owe to them that I am not shut up in a dungeon, instead of being seated in safety and writing to you. These are great claims upon my gratitude, and my feelings towards the government and the people are fully commensurate with those claims; but, as to the changing of allegiance, or the denying of my country, it is what I shall never do. England, though now bowed down by borough-mongers, is my country; her people are public-spirited, warm-hearted, sincere, and brave; common dangers, exertions in common, long intercourse of sentiment, and the thousands upon thousands of marks of friendship that I have received, all these have endeared the people of my country to me in a peculiar manner. I will die an Englishman in exile, or an Englishman in England free."

The following amusing account of the cost and manner of living, and the greater advantages afforded, in Long Island, as compared with those in Hampshire, England, is worth reading:

"Here, then, we are, with mutton not so fine as that of Hambledon, and lamb less early and fine than that of Chilling; but we have many good things which you have not; and, what is better than all the good things put together, we have not only no Secretary of State's warrants, but of all the good things, *every man, woman, and child has an abundance*. The salt, the very salt, which our neighbor Chiddle sells you for twenty English shillings a bushel, is brought here and sold to us for *three* English shillings a bushel. But, then, we have not the honor to see any man such as our neighbor Garnier, whose grandfather was an honest coachman to George the First, and who, for a long life, has had a sinecure of twelve thousand pounds a year, paid him out of those taxes which make neighbor Chiddle's salt so dear in England, and which

tax being taken off when the salt is exported, makes us buy it so cheap. Is there *never* to be an end to these things? Are they to be endured *for ever*? Mrs. Hinxman might here lend her pony to a friend for a week without her husband being *surcharged*, and made on that account to pay the horse-tax for a year. Here your wives might, as good farmers' wives did in England in former times, and as they do here now, turn their fat into candles, and their ashes and grease into soap, without your being either *fined* or *imprisoned* for the deed.

“Here poor Chalcroft of Cager's Green would have no need to pull down, in consequence of an *exciseman's threat*, the hop-poles that the hops were climbing up in his garden-hedge. Here you might, without any risk of loss of estate or of ears, turn your own barley into malt and your own honey into metheglin. Here you might travel from Jericho to Jerusalem, and from Jerusalem to Babylon (for all these places are in this island), and never meet, not only not a *beggar*, but scarcely a person *walking on foot*, as almost everybody rides in some way or other. Here my son William's pretty little miniature mare, which has taught my children to ride, would not have cost me *one hundred pounds sterling* in tax, as she has done in England, when the original cost of herself was only *four pounds*, saddle and all.”

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### COBBETT'S GREAT FINANCIAL MISTAKE.

It was about this time that Cobbett sent over his famous “gridiron” prophecy concerning resumption of specie payments. He had studied finance, as we have seen; but his study was not broad and deep enough; consequently he came to false conclusions. His taking

Tom Paine as a guide on financial matters led him, I think, about as much astray as other people have been led who took poor Paine as a guide in religious matters. Had Cobbett done with this matter as he had done with grammar; had he taken time and pains to study it and gone to the bottom of the subject, he would undoubtedly have come to different conclusions; and, instead of finding himself on the wrong side and eventually condemned as a teacher of false doctrine, he might have gained the immortal honor and fame won by his young opponent, Mr. Horner, whose views of the nation's financial policy, diametrically opposite to those of Cobbett, were so wise and just, that they have been the admiration of statesmen from that day to this. Though rejected at first, Horner's views were finally adopted as wise and beneficent, and the ashes of their author were considered worthy of a place among England's heroes, in Westminster Abbey.

Cobbett's mistake was a tremendous one for he carried thousands of others along with him. It was one of those "blunders worse than a crime;"—a blunder, indeed, made by multitudes of others, by able statesmen and men of letters, but none the less a blunder for all that; a blunder made by tens of thousands in the United States, notwithstanding England's experience before their eyes, and from which many deluded Americans have not yet been freed. Cobbett strenuously opposed resumption of specie payments; he declared it could not be done without ruin to the country, and that it was the utmost folly to think of such a thing. He maintained that resumption was physically impossible, and declared that if Horner's views were ever successfully carried into effect, he would suffer himself to be broiled alive on a gridiron. "I will give Castlereagh leave to lay me on a gridiron, and broil me alive, while Sidmouth may stir the coals, and Canning stand by and laugh at my groans." So confident

was he of the correctness of his views, that he caused the picture of a gridiron to be placed at the head of his Register, in order to keep people in mind of his prophecy, which was ever afterward called the "gridiron prophecy."

Cobbett showed that resumption would cause a depression of trade, innumerable failures, and financial ruin to thousands of all ranks; which it actually did, as it did here in the United States; but he failed to see that these distresses were necessary and transient; that they were merely the cutting away of the unsound branches of the vine, and that resumption was the only road to a sound prosperity, to steady and regular progress in trade and agriculture, the only permanent cure for the constantly increasing distresses of the people. "Before this Bill," he says, referring to Peel's Bill of 1819, "before this Bill arrive at the termination of its provisions, it will cause wheat to sell for four shillings a bushel or less [wheat had been selling as high as twenty-one shillings a bushel]. It will ruin every man who has borrowed money, even to the fourth part of the amount of his property. [Has the same thing not brought every thing down two fourths in the United States?] It will ruin every man who trades, to any considerable extent, on borrowed capital. It will ruin every man who has taken a lease of a farm for three years to come. It will ruin a great many thousands of persons who have annuities, rent charges, ground-rents, marriage-settlements, and other things to pay. It will disable the government from raising taxes sufficient for more than half the demands upon it. It will totally ruin commerce and manufactures. It will convey three-fourths of the estates of the nobility into the hands of fundholders and stock-jobbers." How similar were the effects of Sherman's Bill in this country! Did not almost three-fourths of the property of landlords pass into the hands of bond-holders and money-lenders? What immense for-

tunes might have been made by those who had studied history and foreseen coming events!

It was in the year 1797, in the fourth year of the war with France, that the Bank of England first suspended payments in specie. Then began a period of twenty-four years of bank-notes and high prices, of wild speculations and feverish excitements, of ruinous panics and war-burdens, of flush times and great fortunes for the army contractors and jobbers, of riots and insurrections and terrible hardships among the laboring classes.

In 1810 Parliament appointed a committee to examine the state of the finances and to consider and report what measures might be taken for the improvement thereof. At the head of this committee, which was called the Bullion Committee, was the young Edinburgh lawyer, Francis Horner, a close-thinking, conscientious young man, whose rare talents and upright character had already gained him the respect and confidence of the country. Horner studied the subject thoroughly, and came to the conclusion that the only remedy for the country's troubles was resumption of specie payments. His report was a long, exhaustive one, and his speech thereon, occupying 60 columns in Hansard's (formerly Cobbett's) Parliamentary Reports, was a masterly exposition of the subject. After an exciting debate, Parliament rejected his proposals, and adopted a resolution declaring that the notes of the Bank of England were "equivalent to the legal coin of the realm," and must be "accepted as such in all pecuniary transactions to which such coin is lawfully applicable." "If any discouraged economist at the present moment," says Professor Adams of Michigan University, in his admirable lecture on England's Dark Days, "is disposed to search for comforting precedents of folly, it will probably give him no little satisfaction to find that, just after one of the most able expositions ever made, the House of Commons rose to the sublime folly of declaring that paper was the equivalent of



gold, even though gold in the market was then worth a premium of 15 per cent." It was not till eight years more of disasters and distresses of all kinds, that the folly of this resolution and the wisdom of those of Horner were perceived; and in 1819, Sir Robert Peel, who acknowledged his error in voting against Horner's views in 1811, and his present concurrence therewith, introduced a bill fixing a time for gradual resumption (1821-1823). This bill was adopted, and the country was immediately put on the sure road to prosperity. It was on account of this action of Peel's that Cobbett, long afterward, when he got into Parliament, made the motion that Sir Robert's name should be struck from the list of Privy Councillors, and the defeat he experienced on that occasion was almost equal to the broiling he wished to undergo should resumption succeed.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### "A NEW WAY TO PAY OLD DEBTS."

BUT we must return to the farm on Long Island. On the 20th of May, 1818, Cobbett's house and much of his farm stock were destroyed by fire; and he concluded at first to remove to New York before setting sail for England; but he changed his mind and put up a thatched hut on the spot where his house had been situated, and here he lived till the summer of 1819, when he made preparations for returning to England. The Six Acts and the Act for the Repeal of the Habeas Corpus Act were repealed; and so, with regard to his personal freedom, he had nothing to fear; he could begin life in England anew, with perhaps as good prospects of success as ever he had; and as all his hopes, all his plans, and all his pro-

jects of political reform and progress were centered in England, thither he determined to go.

And now comes one of the many startling things in this startling man's life; one of those "outrageous propositions" and "demagogic sophistries" for which he was so heartily denounced. He was about to return to England; his creditors there would demand payment of their claims; he was unable to pay them; was it his fault they had not been paid? How came they to be unpaid? He could have paid them all at one time; but he had lost all his wealth. How came he to lose his wealth? The Six Acts had done it. Who made the Six Acts? The Parliament. Who made the Parliament? The people of England. Well, then, let the people of England, or those of them to whom he owed money, go to the Parliament for their money; for the Parliament is responsible for his failure, not he. That was how he looked at it. That was the view of the matter which he expressed to his creditors. Had he perhaps been talking with some of our American repudiators or greenbackers of that day? It looks very much like something of their manufacture.

The action of the Parliament elected by the people ruined him; and he felt inclined to make the people who elected that Parliament responsible for its action. Well, then, his proper course would be to sue the people, the entire people, for the damage done him, and not make a dozen of them responsible for it; for his dozen creditors were not the people of England. His behavior on this occasion was perhaps assumed, as one way of showing the people of England the consequences of allowing blockheads to legislate for them; and to those of them who had lost their money by this legislation, or by Cobbett's interpretation of it, it was no doubt a forcible argument. He himself, however, as we shall soon see, never meant to adhere strictly to this principle; it was, in fact, one of those reckless strokes of his, in

which there was more *malice*, as the French say, than mischief.

In a letter from Long Island, to Mr. Tipper, the printer, dated November 20th, 1817, which he meant as a kind of circular-letter for the whole of his creditors in England, he says: "I hold it to be perfectly just that I should never, in any way whatever, give up one single farthing of my future earnings to the payment of any debt in England. My reason is, that the Six Acts were despotic ordinances intended for the sole purpose of taking from me the real and certain and increasing means of paying off my debt and mortgage, which I should have done in two years. . . . But from the great desire which I have, not only to return to my native country, but also to prevent the infamous Acts levelled against me from injuring those persons with whom I have pecuniary engagements, and some of whom have become my creditors from feelings of friendship and a desire to serve me, I EAGERLY WAIVE ALL CLAIM TO THIS PRINCIPLE, and I shall neglect no means within my power fully to pay and satisfy every demand, as far as that can be done consistently with that duty which calls on me to take care that my family have the means of fairly exerting their industry, and of leading the sort of life to which they have a just claim."

After the expression of great expectations from the profits of his works, new and old, he continues: "Whatever part of this profit can, without endangering the well-being of my beloved and exemplary, affectionate and virtuous family, be allotted to the discharge of my debts and encumbrances, shall, with scrupulous fidelity, be so allotted; but as to this particular object, and as to other sources of gain, I will first take care that the acts of tyrannical confiscation which have been put in force against me, shall not deprive this family of the means, not only of comfortable existence, but of seeking fair and

honorable distinction in the world. It is impossible for me to say, or guess at, what I may, with my constant bodily health, and with the aptitude and industry which are now become a part of me, be able to do in the way of literary works productive of gain; but I can with safety declare that, beyond the purposes of security to my family, I will retain or expend nothing until no man shall say of me that I owe him a farthing.”

This letter, being intended for all his creditors, soon came into the hands of Sir Francis Burdett, who wrote him the following reply, which, as might be expected from the nature of the case, is a very strong one:

“It is not my intention to enter into any controversy respecting the honesty or dishonesty of paying or not paying debts according to the convenience of the party owing. It seems that if ever it should suit your convenience, and take nothing from the comforts and enjoyments of yourself and family, such comforts and enjoyments, and means, too, of distinguishing themselves as you think they are entitled to; all this being previously secured, then you think yourself bound to pay your debts;—if, on the contrary, that cannot be effected without sacrifices on your and their part, in that case your creditors have no claim to prefer, and you no duty to perform. You then stand absolved; *rectus in foro conscientiae*, and for this singular reason, because those who lent you their money when you were in difficulty and distress, in order to save you and your family from ruin, were and are unable to protect you either against your own fears or the power of an arbitrary government under which they have the misfortune to live, and to which they are equally exposed. These principles, which are laughable in theory, are detestable in practice. That you should not only entertain, and act upon, but openly avow them, and blind your own understanding, or think to blind that of others, by such flimsy pretences, is one more melancholy proof of the facility

with which self-interest can assume the mask of hypocrisy, and, by means of the weakest sophistry, overpower the strongest understanding. How true is our common-law maxim, that no man is an upright judge in his own cause! how truly and prettily said by the French, *La nature se pipe*—nor less truly, though more grossly, in English, ‘Nature’s her own bawd!’

“In expressing my abhorrence of the principles which you lay down for your conduct, and concerning which you challenge my opinion, . . . I do not desire that you should act upon any other with regard to me; I should be sorry your family were put to any inconvenience on my account. As to complaint or reproach, they are the offspring of weakness and folly—disdain should stifle them; but nothing can or ought to stifle the expression of disgust every honest mind must feel at the want of integrity in the principles you proclaim, and of feeling and generosity in the sentiments you express.”

This letter, forcible and elegant as it is, would have come with much better grace, with much more force, from some one of Cobbett’s creditors to whom he had rendered fewer services; to whom he had rendered less important and less powerful support than he had done to Sir Francis Burdett. What we have to notice, in the whole matter, is the fact that a man of the strongest understanding could, in a moment of weakness, give utterance to the weakest of arguments, and lay down the most foolish of principles, without ever considering that he thus laid himself open to the most damaging thrusts on the part of his enemies.

## CHAPTER X.

COBBETT'S RESURRECTION OF PAINE.—INFIDELS AND BELIEVERS.  
—WHAT PAINE DID FOR THE UNITED STATES.

THIS was not enough; for one rash step leads to another; and Cobbett was now bent on committing acts which outraged everybody's notions of propriety. He seems to have made up his mind to do whatever he thought proper, even if the whole world condemned his conduct. Viewed, however, in a fair and unprejudiced spirit, there is a certain element of noble and generous feeling in his act, which cannot fail to be recognized by all right-thinking men.

On his return to England, November 20th, 1819, he brought with him a present to his countrymen which they did not at all relish, something of whose virtues they had no appreciation whatever. This was nothing less than a box containing the bones of the famous THOMAS PAINE; over which bones, as they were those of an Englishman, he intended that a splendid monument should be erected in England. This man Paine, whom Cobbett formerly denounced as "a rebel to his king and his God," as "a hypocritical monster," a "ragamuffin deist," and the like, he now called "a noble of nature," "a master in political science," "a man of great political sagacity," "the scourge of tyrants, under whatever name they disguised their tyranny," and so on, and endeavored in various ways to inspire enthusiasm for his memory. Time, experience, and reading, had changed his opinions of Paine, and he thought it would not be a difficult task to change the opinions of others concerning him.

In this attempt, however, he failed utterly. Paine was known, in England, only as a man who had written against the Bible, and even the political theories of such a man

would not be listened to. Had Cobbett been a man of less intellectual power, such a step would certainly have ruined him beyond recovery; for nobody in England wanted to know anything of Thomas Paine or his bones, and the man who praised him was looked upon as little better than Paine himself, an enemy to England and the English Church.

Nor do I think that the feeling in the United States towards Paine is very much more favorable, or rather very much less hostile, than in England. Although he aided the American Revolutionary cause with pen and tongue; although he did more, perhaps, than any other single person in the furthering of that cause, he is not regarded with the same feelings of kindness and of reverence with which the other Revolutionary patriots are regarded. His religious principles have blighted his reputation and branded his name with something peculiarly odious, something which the mass of mankind seem to avoid as they would a loathsome disease. We have recently seen an attempt, by a gentleman of marvelous eloquence and rare boldness of character,\* to vindicate the private character and public services of this much-abused man; an attempt which has, I believe, been completely successful, and by which his defender has gained the sympathy and the admiration of all right-thinking and fair-minded men. But this attempt has been admired because it was inspired by an honest and laudable desire to show fair play to one who was no longer able to defend himself, and whom nobody else attempted to defend; by no means because it was made in favor of Mr. Thomas Paine, the infidel.

It is hard to create, among a Christian people, enthusiasm for an infidel, however talented he may have been, however much good he may have done; for his revelation

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\* Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll.

to man, even if true, is an unwelcome and painful revelation, adding nothing to his happiness or comfort in life or in death; while the faith of the believer is a pleasing and inspiring one, filling his life with the sunshine of hope and surrounding it with a halo of imperishable glory. While Washington has ever been regarded with reverence and love, Jefferson inspires but cold esteem; while the superstitious, intolerant, bigotted, yet learned and large-hearted Doctor Johnson is still greatly loved and admired, and his life read once a year by scores of scholars, the subtle, philosophic, but free-thinking David Hume inspires no feeling warmer than respect; while Schiller is enthroned in the hearts of his countrymen, Goethe is regarded without a particle of affection; and while Corneille and Molière and Racine are enthusiastically loved and admired by all the world, Voltaire has never been looked upon, even by those who admire his genius, with any degree of affection. Such are the feelings of the mass of mankind toward free-thinkers. It may be said, this is because their character has been vilified and their memory loaded with abuse; but this, though often too true, is not the only reason: most people have an instinctive dread of the man who, with ruthless hand, attempts to destroy all those sacred hopes and fears which have been instilled into their minds by their nearest and dearest benefactor, their mother.

Cobbett did not, however, really go very much out of his way to perform this extraordinary act of devotion to the remains of the departed infidel. When the circumstances are considered, it will not appear at all strange that he acted as he did. Paine had lived on a farm, given to him by the nation, at New Rochelle, Long Island, and when he died was buried in a corner of one of his own fields. Now this farm of Paine's was only a few miles from Cobbett's farm; and when in September or October, 1819, the farm was sold, and the new owner wished to



transfer the bones of Paine to a New York churchyard, he was informed that he could only get "leave to put them in the ground in a refuse-place, where strangers and soldiers and other friendless persons were usually buried."\* This Cobbett heard of, and it no doubt roused his indignation to think that the remains of such a man, an Englishman, too, should be so disrespectfully treated. So he resolved that the bones of Paine should be taken to his native land, where they would receive honorable burial, and where his memory would be revered.

"Paine lies in a little hole," he says, "under the grass and weeds of an obscure farm in America. There, however, he shall not lie, unnoticed, much longer. He belongs to England. His fame is the property of England; and if no other people will show that they value that fame, the people of England will. Yes, amongst the pleasures that I promise myself, is that of seeing the name of Paine honored in every part of England; where base Corruption caused him, while alive, to be burnt in effigy. We will honor his name, his remains, and his memory, in all sorts of ways. While the dead boroughmongers, and the base slaves who have been their tools, moulder away under unnoticed masses of marble and brass, the tomb of this 'noble of nature' will be an object of pilgrimage with the people. . . . Let this be considered the act of the Reformers of England, Scotland and Ireland. In their name we opened the grave, and in their name will the tomb be raised. We do not look upon ourselves as adopting *all* Paine's opinions upon all subjects. He was a great man, an Englishman, a friend of freedom, and the first and greatest enemy of the borough and paper system. This is enough for us."

Though Cobbett declared that he admired Paine for his political, not his theological writings, which latter he said

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\* Edward Smith's Biography of Cobbett, Vol. II., p. 214.

he had no acquaintance with—and we may the more readily believe this from the fact that he never did care about discussing theological questions—it was of no avail; the English people would have none of him; and the whole matter was finally turned into ridicule by Cobbett's enemies, who sent forth the report that he had dug up the bones of an old negro who had been buried next to Paine, and not those of the noted infidel himself. He was caricatured as a bone-grubber, carrying a large bag, with the label, "William Cobbett with Tom Paine's bones, to make knife-handles. N. B.—Bad spec.;" and one of the Tory inn-keepers, at whose house he stopped, desired him, on learning who he was, to leave the house, and after his departure, hoisted a placard announcing that "The bones of Cobbett and Paine have been ordered to quit the house." All his projects for raising money to build a monument to Paine failed; and the whole affair, in short, caused more injury to his literary and political prospects than any step he had taken in his life.

"His plan now," says Sir Henry Bulwer, "was to raise a howl against the returning exile as an atheist and a demagogue amongst one portion of society, not doubting that in such case he would be taken up as the champion of civil and religious liberty by another." This, however, would make him out a demagogue and a hypocrite, and he certainly was neither; for his sincerity in his admiration of Paine, as a politician and financier, is abundantly proved by his writings, previous and subsequent to this period. As a statesman, he places Paine far above Edmund Burke; and declares that the treatment Paine received while in the Excise in England was the primary cause of our American Revolutionary war; for that that treatment drove him to America, where he did more than any other to create, maintain, and make that war a success. "As my Lord Grenville," says Cobbett, in his letter to Lord Liverpool, 1819, "introduced

the name of Burke, suffer me, my lord, to introduce the name of the man who put that Burke to shame, who drove him off the public stage to seek shelter in the pension-list, and who is now named fifty million times where the name of the pensioned Burke is mentioned once. The cause of the American colonies was the cause of the English Constitution, which says that no man shall be taxed without his own consent, given by himself, or given by some one in the choosing of whom he has had a free voice. But it was an English exciseman; a petty officer in the Excise in Sussex, who, having gone to America, gave life, activity, vigor, and final success to this cause. It is not improbable that Mr. PAINE might have received insolent treatment from some ignorant, conceited, unjust, and brutal superior in office. It is not improbable that in contemplating the characters and the actions of persons in power, he might have swelled with indignation against a system that could place and keep power in such hands [as Cobbett did himself on his return to England]. A little thing sometimes produces a great effect; an insult offered to a man of great talent and unconquerable perseverance has, in many instances, produced, in the long run, most tremendous effects [of which there is no better instance than the government prosecution of Cobbett himself in 1803]; and it appears to me very clear that some beastly insults, offered to Mr. PAINE while he was in the Excise in England, was THE REAL CAUSE OF THE REVOLUTION IN AMERICA;—for, though the nature of the cause of America was such as I have before described it; though the principles were firm in the minds of the people of that country; still it was Mr. PAINE, and Mr. PAINE alone, WHO BROUGHT THOSE PRINCIPLES INTO ACTION.”

Paine’s “Common Sense” was the most successful exponent and the best defence of the American Revolution, and his “Rights of Man” the best and only successful reply to Burke’s “Reflections on the French Revolution.”

As Colonel Ingersoll has truly said, the history of liberty cannot be written with the name of Paine left out. We must not forget, too, that the Burke whom Cobbett describes is the Burke of the period after the French Revolution, not that of the period before it; for, although the same man, the former Burke was vastly superior to the latter, the French Revolution and the unfortunate death of his only and much-beloved son having completely turned his head. It was something like the effect produced on Pascal after the accident at the Pont Neuilly. Now it was that George III. suddenly discovered that Burke was a great man. While he was in the maturity of his great powers, delivering masterly speeches in advocacy of truly wise and statesmanlike measures, and opposing with matchless eloquence the suicidal policy of the government, no notice whatever was taken of him by the king or the court; but no sooner had he become the champion of monarchy and the enemy of everything revolutionary, than the sun of royalty began to shine beneficently on him, and large bounties, in the shape of pensions amounting to thousands of pounds annually, were showered upon him. We shall hear something more of these showers by and by.\*

I have said that there was an element of noble and generous feeling in Cobbett's conduct in this matter of Paine. The truth is, there is nothing in his whole life that redounds more to his honor. His bold, open, and generous admiration of Paine is deserving of the highest respect; for

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\* See Buckle's *History of Civilization*, Vol. I, pp. 326-341. Mr. Prior, in his *Life of Burke*, sets down these pensions at £3,700 a year. Just think of an income for life of \$18,000 a year! I am inclined to think that some of our good Republican statesmen would become monarchists, too, for such a consideration.—Cobbett's estimate of Paine will certainly not be surprising to the gentleman who has lately been endeavoring to prove, in the New York papers, that Paine was the author of the Declaration of Independence.

it was unselfish, and uttered at the risk of ruin to his own reputation. Such is the obloquy attaching to the name of Paine, that, even at the present day, there are thousands who admire his writings, who do not dare to confess it. Cobbett was not an infidel; he stuck to the English Episcopal Church all his life; he never inculcated infidelity or affected the society of infidels. But he had the merit to perceive the good qualities of the infidel Paine, and the courage to express his admiration of those qualities. He admired him for his fearless advocacy of what he considered right, of what he considered true; he admired him for his clear, statesmanlike views on various political questions; he admired him for his literary genius, for his bold, vigorous English style; he admired him for his disinterested conduct and his large, benevolent heart; he admired him for his patriotic, philanthropic character; and he had the manliness to declare openly his admiration of all these things. He was proud of him, too, as his countryman, a man from whom he had learned many things; and whenever Cobbett received instruction, he had the honesty to acknowledge the benefit, by whomsoever conferred. Paine had some really great qualities. There is something grand in his declaration, that "the world was his country, and doing good his religion;" and there is something that appeals to every candid mind as true, in his assertion, that "any system of religion that shocks the mind of a child cannot be a true system."

In all this, there was nothing, of course, which the REVEREND John Selby Watson, M. A., F. R. S. L., could see to admire; nor does he fail to minister to the blind, unreasoning, prejudiced hatred with which the ignorant multitude of Cobbett's day regarded the name of Paine, and do all he can to cause similar feelings to attach to the name of Cobbett.

## CHAPTER XI.

AT THEM AGAIN.—DOWN, BUT NOT DISPIRITED.

COBBETT'S arrival created quite a stir in some parts of England, especially in Manchester, where it was apprehended by the authorities that his coming would create a disturbance. A few months previous to his return, there had assembled, in a field in Manchester called Peterloo, an open-air mass-meeting, presided over by Cobbett's co-worker, Henry Hunt, for the purpose of considering the question of parliamentary reform. This meeting was violently dispersed by the orders of the magistrates of Manchester—inspired, no doubt, by the wishes of the heartless Castlereagh—and in doing so some troops of horse were set upon the defenceless people, of whom several were killed and many wounded. This was called the Peterloo massacre. So the magistrates of the city, mindful of this affair, sent a message to Cobbett, on hearing of his coming, informing him that it would be well for him not to enter the city with any display, or to do any thing likely to cause a breach of the peace. They caused placards to be posted up all over the city, enjoining all good citizens to stay at home and to refrain from getting up meetings either to welcome or to denounce the coming agitator; and to make sure against all eventualities, they had special constables sworn in, and sent for a body of troops. Cobbett, at first, determined to go there at all hazards; but, on second thoughts, he prudently concluded to put off his visit to that city till "a more convenient season." He went on to London, where some five hundred of his friends and followers had the pleasure of meeting and entertaining him at dinner at the Crown and Anchor, on which occasion Mr. Hunt presided, and Cobbett made a speech

about parliamentary reform and the virtues and great qualities of Thomas Paine.

Although financially almost ruined, he renewed, with dauntless courage, his former printing enterprises, and even started a daily paper, in order, as he said, to have a more immediate and frequent intercourse with the people than the Register afforded. However powerful a writer or however popular a man the editor may be, seldom does a daily paper pay on its first establishment; large sums are generally sunk before it begins to make any returns, and Cobbett's "Evening Post" formed no exception to the rule. Not being backed by sufficient capital to keep it a-going until it did pay, it was discontinued after two months. This rash enterprise swallowed up the little means that he had left, and he was obliged to declare himself bankrupt. "He was so reduced," says Mr. Watson, "that he had not even a farthing to divide among his creditors. Tipper, the paper merchant, to whom he owed more than three thousand pounds, was good enough to sign his certificate. Timothy Brown, one of his great supporters, gave him a pound note and a few shillings, that he might have, for form's sake, something to surrender to the commissioners. When, after some settlement of his affairs, he managed to collect his family together in lodgings at Brompton, they found themselves in possession of only three shillings, and under the necessity of borrowing money for printing the next number of the Register." What a change to the man who, two years before, had an income of ten thousand a year, and possessed property worth seventy thousand pounds!

He attempted to raise money by a penny subscription among the friends of reform. It was to be a fund to be used for furthering the cause of Reform "in a way such as his discretion should point out." He certainly made no false pretensions about it; for he openly declared that the sum he required would be five thousand pounds, "to

be used solely by him, and without any one ever having the right to ask him what he was going to do with it." Anything more frank and straightforward than this could hardly be desired. However, he did not succeed in getting much in this way. Mr. Watson sneers at Cobbett for such an endeavor to raise money, and thinks that "the project had no other effect than that of giving him a farther impulse downwards." What! shall the princes of the blood, who have never done an iota for the benefit of the people, who have in fact been reared, and clad, and fed, and fattened, and sumptuously maintained at their expense,—shall these persons, who know nothing and care less about the distresses or the burdens of the people, come begging and supplicating them, through their representatives in Parliament, for money to support them and pay their debts; and shall a man like Cobbett, who has spent his life in advancing the interests of the people, in promoting their social, moral, and physical welfare, in affording them inestimable delight and priceless blessings by his writings; shall such a man be decried and sneered at because he asks some of the people whom he has thus served and benefited to assist him? Of course, none but princes should take money from the people;—one of their teachers, one of their benefactors, must never think of such a thing; it is only for royal highnesses to live on public money.

An attempt at a reconciliation between Cobbett and Sir Francis Burdett proved fruitless. It was an affair of third parties; for neither Cobbett nor Sir Francis seemed at all desirous of renewing each other's acquaintance. "Mr. Cobbett," said Sir Francis to one of the mediators, "must remember the allegations which he has made against me in the Register, and must know whether they are true or false. If they are true, no honest man would wish to renew intercourse with me; and if they are false, what is to be thought of the person who uttered such charges, know-



ing their groundlessness?" Cobbett had accused Sir Francis of a leaning toward the Conservatives and of a dilatoriness and lukewarmness towards the Reformers and their cause which amounted almost to treachery. His grounds for these assertions were not without foundation, for it is well known that Sir Francis began at this time to associate with the Tory nobility, to fall away from the Reformers, and he finally went over to the camp of the enemy. But Cobbett's conduct with regard to his debt to him, concerning which he was so often taunted by the opposition papers, was by no means praiseworthy. If he had simply recognized the debt and declared his inability to pay it, no one would have found fault with him; but he maintained that as Sir Francis never came forward on the occasion of his (Cobbett's) bankruptcy, to prove his debt, he owed him nothing.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### STANDS FOR COVENTRY.—DEFENCE OF QUEEN CAROLINE.

WHEN, in 1820, on the death of George the Third, Parliament was dissolved, Cobbett determined to make an attempt to get a seat in the new Parliament. He published, in the Register, an address to the Reformers, presenting his claims as a candidate, and requesting them to begin raising funds to ensure his election. As there was no salary or pecuniary advantage connected with being a member of Parliament, and as his whole activity as a member of that body would be for the benefit of the people in general as well as of the particular county that elected him, Cobbett thought there was no reason why those people or that county, if they desired his election, should not raise funds to elect him; nor did he think that in asking them to do so he was furthering merely his own interests.

The reader cannot fail to have seen that if he had sought merely his own advancement, at the expense of other considerations, he could have long ago become a member of Parliament, or possibly a high officer of the crown.

On the present occasion his appeal for money was not in vain. One of his supporters subscribed five hundred pounds, and others subscribed smaller sums; but as this was not sufficient—(what a ruinously expensive honor! No wonder it has made many a man a bankrupt; *vide* Moore's Life of Sheridan)—he sent out a circular to men of wealth, requesting seventy of them to subscribe each ten pounds more. "As far as the press can go," he says, "I want no assistance. Aided by my sons, I have already made the ferocious cowards of the London press sink into silence. But there is a larger range, a more advantageous ground to stand on, and that is the House of Commons. If I were there, the ferocious cowards of the press would be compelled, through their three hundred mouths, to tell the nation all that I should say, how much I should do; and it is easy to imagine what I should say, how much I should do. A great effect on the public mind I have already produced; but what should I produce in only the next session, if I were in the House of Commons! Yet there I cannot be without your assistance."

Coventry, the scene of Godiva's famous exploit, was the borough he was to contest—this being thought the most favorable place for him; but on approaching the town, he was met by a number of ruffians, probably descendants of Peeping Tom, who treated him in the most insulting manner, and even threatened to throw him into the river. At the hustings, his opponents were greatly in the majority, and their conduct was so rough that he calls them "savages," "yelling beasts," "man-brutes," "rich ruffians," and the like. He mixed freely in the rough scenes of the canvass, however, and after a desperate struggle to get votes, in which he lost his voice shouting to the up-

roarious multitude, he found himself defeated by a large majority, and with a much better knowledge of English election contests than he had before.

Queen Caroline's trial occurred in this year (1820). Cobbett defended her with all his eloquence; in fact he wrote better and more effectively in her behalf than any other or all others of her literary defenders; for it was he that wrote the Queen's famous letter to the King, a masterly production, in which the whole pitiable situation of this most unfortunate lady is feelingly and forcibly displayed; it was he, to use the eloquent words of the poet Coleridge, that "with kettle-drum revéillé echoed her wrongs through the mine and the coal-pit, lifted the latch of every cottage, and thundered with no runaway knock at Carlton Palace itself."

It may be stated here, for the benefit of those of my younger readers who are not familiar with the history of Queen Charlotte, that George the Fourth, while still Prince of Wales, married in 1795 his cousin, Caroline Amelia Elizabeth, second daughter of the Duke of Brunswick. In 1796 the Princess Charlotte Augusta was born of the marriage, and almost immediately afterwards the Prince left his wife, not having spoken to her for months previously. Then she lived by herself in a country house at Blackheath, where she was the object of much sympathy, the people regarding her as the victim of her husband's licentiousness. In 1808, the Prince having heard evil reports of her conduct, caused an investigation to be made, in which nothing but imprudence could be proved against her. In 1814 she obtained leave to visit her kinsfolk at Brunswick, and afterwards to make a farther tour. She visited the cities along the coasts of the Mediterranean, and passed some time at the Lake of Como, in Italy, where an Italian, named Bergami, was a great part of the time in her company. When, in 1820, her husband became king, she was offered £50,000 a year to renounce

the title of Queen and live abroad; but she refused, and returned to England, making a triumphal entry into London. Now the government, at the instigation of the king, began proceedings against her, by bringing in a Bill for Divorce. This Bill necessitated a regular trial of the queen, in which much that was improper, but nothing criminal, was proved against her. The shameful manner in which she had been treated by her husband—the “first gentleman of Europe” forsooth!—and the splendid eloquence of Brougham in Parliament and of Cobbett and others in the press, created such a strong feeling in her favor, that the ministry were obliged, even after its passing the House of Lords, to give up the Divorce Bill. The queen then assumed the rank of royalty, but was refused coronation, and turned away from the door of Westminster Abbey on the day of the coronation of her husband.

Cobbett, as I have said, wrote her famous letter to the king. Dashed off at night, the letter was copied by his daughter Ann on the following morning, and taken by his son to Mr. Alderman Wood, who delivered it to the queen. “The queen,” says Cobbett’s son, John M. Cobbett, “as my father understood from the alderman, was so delighted with it, that she determined to send it to the king at Windsor immediately; and, fearing that her legal advisers might, if they arrived before it was gone, advise her to the contrary, she signed the paper just as it was then written and sent it off. . . . Shortly afterward it was published in the *Times* newspaper, and thence it went into every newspaper in the kingdom, and, being printed on open sheets of paper, was posted all over London. It instantly produced the desired effect; the newspapers that first published it were eagerly sought for; groups of people stood about the corners where it was posted, reading and discussing it; and the bulk of the people, now clearly understanding that the queen was resolved to remain and stand her trial, determined to act their part

on the occasion. The letter was so great a favorite with the queen, that when she had her portrait painted for the city of London, she desired Mr. Lonsdale, the artist, to represent her with this document in her hand." Here was another of those splendid hits, which, had he been a self-seeking politician, he would have turned to no small advantage to himself. What was the conduct of Cobbett? Queen Caroline offered to reward him handsomely; and yet, though poor as a church-mouse, he declined her offers of reward. The queen, however, being determined that he should accept something as a token of her appreciation of his efforts in her behalf, bought a complete set of his Register, for which she gave him £50, which was £20 more than the regular price. A politician of the Grant school would have made it the means of securing advantages to his "cousins and his uncles and his aunts."

The authorship of this letter was attributed to several distinguished men of the day, especially to Dr. Parr, "the big-wigged rhetorician;" and one writer, recognizing the hand of Cobbett in it, says, "Perhaps a more classical pen may have here and there polished off the vulgarity of the author of the TWOPENNY REGISTER."

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### CASTLEREAGH, COBBETT, AND WATSON.

IN 1821 Cobbett republished his essays on the paper system, entitled "Paper against Gold;" he also published a work on Cottage Economy and his Twelve Sermons. The latter contain as much sound sterling Saxon sense as anything in theological literature. He also commenced his rides through the country, leisurely observing everything as he went along, and making speeches at the

towns, villages, hamlets on his way, and wherever he had an opportunity urging parliamentary reform as the grand panacea for all the evils of the country. He published the results of his observations weekly in the Register, under the title of "Rural Rides," which were afterwards collected and published in book-form. Though full of politics,—in fact the book may be said to be a mixture of politics, pleasantry and pen-pictures of rural life,—it is very amusing, and contains some admirable descriptions of English scenery. He went on riding and lecturing and publishing accounts of his rides for more than ten years.

Mr. Watson says: "In August, 1822, the suicide of Lord Castlereagh gave occasion to Cobbett to bestow a kick on a dead lion. He wrote a satirical letter to the boroughmongers, commencing, 'Let me express to you my satisfaction that Castlereagh has cut his throat;' and, in a letter to Joseph Swann, who was sent to Chester jail for selling seditious pamphlets, he says, 'Castlereagh has cut his throat, and is dead. Let that sound reach you in the depths of your dungeon, and let it carry consolation to your suffering soul.'" A dead LION! If Mr. Watson had said a dead tiger, or a dead idiot, or a dead mule, or a dead compound of all three, he would have been nearer the truth. The author of the horrible cruelties of 1798 in Ireland, of the disastrous Walcheren expedition, of the suspension of the Habeas Corpus in time of profound peace, of the narrow, tyrannical Six Acts, and of many other wicked, cruel, heartless acts, had more resemblance to a tiger than to a lion. He has justly been termed "the most intolerable mischief that ever was cast by an angry Providence over a helpless people." He and his master, George the Third, another of Mr. Watson's lions, were worthy of each other: a pair of narrow, ignorant, insane wretches, more fitted to peddle papers or blacken boots than to rule a kingdom.

Castlereagh's death, like that of Louis XIV., was, in fact, an occasion of rejoicing for the *whole people*; evidence of which is shown by the well-known fact that the voices of the choir chanting the burial-service at his funeral were almost drowned by the yells of the mob outside exulting over his death. His departure was, in truth, a great relief, a great riddance to the country; and if one can with propriety rejoice over any man's death, surely it is proper in this case. Nor was Cobbett the only one, among the literary fraternity, that rejoiced over his death; indeed, they doubtless all rejoiced, though few gave utterance to their joy. Prominent, however, among the utterances that were given, was Leigh Hunt's (or perhaps Lord Byron's) unsparing fling in the *Liberator*:

"So he has cut his throat at last! He? Who?  
The man who cut his country's long ago."

If such a man is a *lion* in Mr. Watson's eyes, we may easily imagine what Cobbett must be, and what Mr. Watson's motives in writing his life must have been. Yet it is perhaps quite natural for this gentleman to feel sympathy for the man who murdered his country as well as himself; for the man who goes deliberately and systematically to work to destroy a great man's name and fame partakes himself of the character of an assassin.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE PRESTONIANS' OVATION.

IN 1826 Cobbett made another attempt to get into Parliament, this time to represent the borough of Preston, in Lancashire; a place where, according to Mr. Watson, the right of suffrage, even before the Reform Bill, was shared by nearly all the inhabitants of the place. In this endeavor

he was supported by Sir Thomas Bevor, a Norfolk baronet, who thought highly of Cobbett, and who not only presided at a meeting to further his election, but promoted a subscription to that end. On the day of election, Cobbett appeared at Preston with his four sons. He had three candidates opposed to him, and it appears that, in his speeches, he attacked these candidates in too personal a manner to gain himself votes. At the close of the election, he was the lowest on the list, having received fewer than one thousand votes, while the highest received over three thousand. The whole number of votes cast for the three candidates, of whom two were elected, was 7,678: the population of Preston in 1851 was nearly 70,000. Supposing the population in 1826 to have been two-thirds of this number, the vote would still be very small for a town "in which the right of suffrage was shared by almost all the inhabitants of the place."

During this campaign, and even after the election, Cobbett laid himself open to ridicule by much vain-glorious talk about himself and his popularity among the people of Preston. On presenting himself to the Prestonians the day after the election, and asking them if they still wished him to be their member, "Never," he says, "never was there such a show of hands; never approbation so unanimous, cheers so cordial, and honors so great!" Might not this, however, have been the spirit shown by the *mass* of the people, the "lower orders," as the Tories called them, as opposed to the "upper ten," the few thousand voters? There is nothing more probable; yet Mr. Watson speaks of his *audacity* in making such a statement, following the newspaper writers of the day, who, of course, ridiculed him beyond measure for his "unparalleled vanity and presumption."

Mr. Watson makes much of his constantly putting himself forward, of his praising and puffing his books, his trees, his plants, etc., and characterizes his subscrip-



tions for political purposes, as “attempts to put money into his pocket.” But the truth is, Cobbett’s complete openness, his unreserved exhibition of all his plans and purposes in these matters, robs them of the reproach which would otherwise attach to them; everybody could see that, at bottom, the man’s intentions were fair, and that for every thought he had about his own profit and advantage, he had twenty about the profit and advantage of his country. “He was always a hearty Englishman,” says Sir Henry Bulwer, “. . . ever for making England great, powerful, and prosperous,—her people healthy, brave, and free.” What did he seek more than a plain living for himself and his family? Did he ever seek, did he ever receive, a penny of the public money? Not though it had been repeatedly offered to him for services rendered to the nation. Was he a spendthrift, a gambler, a drunkard, a glutton, or a libertine? None of these. All of these things were far from him; his only failing, if it may be so called, was his overmuch speaking of himself. There is no denying the fact, that for self-conceit, and a bold but open putting forward of himself, he surpassed, perhaps, any Englishman that ever lived. But no man rightly acquainted with him will say that, in putting himself forward, his aims were purely selfish, for himself and his own advantage. He wanted every young Englishman to become the industrious, early-rising, frugal, persevering, happy man he was himself. He knew, he felt that he was fit to lead, and he simply declared openly and plainly what he felt. “He writes himself plain William Cobbett,” says Hazlitt, “strips himself quite naked as anybody would wish; in a word, his egotism is full of individuality, and has room for very little vanity in it.” Rousseau is celebrated as the only man who ever told all the *bad* as well as the *good* in his life; Cobbett may be set down as the only man in literature who openly declared all the *best* that was in

him and all the best he *thought* of himself;—the *worst*, he left for his enemies to declare, for he knew there were plenty of them ready to do it.

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## CHAPTER XV.

### AN UNPARALLELED SCENE.

THE most striking passage in the whole of Mr. Watson's book is his description of an uproarious "dinner at the Crown and Anchor tavern, given to Sir Francis Burdett, to celebrate the twentieth anniversary (1826) of his election for Westminster. When Sir Francis proposed 'a full, fair, and free representation of the people in Parliament,' Cobbett started up to offer an amendment. His proposition was the signal for such an uproar as was probably never heard before or since at a public dinner. There were loud cries of 'Turn him out!' and a disposition was shown by a large majority to do what was suggested. Cobbett, however, had not gone without supporters, who introduced two constables to guard him, and kept up the clamor till he should be heard. At last, as there seemed to be no other mode of mitigating the tumult, he was allowed to speak, when he declared his amendment to be, 'That his Majesty should be solicited to eject from his counsels all enemies to reform, and especially that implacable enemy to reform, Mr. Canning, at whose back Sir Francis Burdett had consented to sit. What he endeavored to say in support of this amendment was drowned in noise; and after exhausting himself in futile efforts to be heard, he sat down amid a general shout. When the health of Sir Francis was proposed, he again rose, and vociferated 'No, no,' flourishing his arms above his head in a most astonishing manner. Fresh in-

dications appeared of a determination to eject him. He roared out that Sir Francis was 'a traitor to the cause of the people.' The health of John Cam Hobhouse being drunk, Mr. Hobhouse rose to return thanks, and Cobbett rose at the same time and refused to give way. He placed his arms a-kimbo, thrust out his tongue, and gnashed his teeth. Hobhouse's party cheered and clapped their hands; Cobbett's hissed, howled, and screamed. Cobbett bawled out the name of Hobhouse with offensive epithets; and Hobhouse, at last provoked beyond endurance, snatched a wand from one of the stewards and declared that he would knock Cobbett down unless he desisted, though he was a miscreant unworthy of any gentleman's chastisement. Cobbett and his party retorted in the language of Billingsgate. The others asked why he did not pay Sir Francis what he had borrowed, and reproached him with having grubbed up Tom Paine's bones only to make money of them. The rest of the evening was passed in similar contention and uproar; Sir Francis and his friends in vain endeavoring to restore order."

I don't think this can be beaten even by Tammany Hall; and as a specimen of the amenities of public life, it is a pretty picture as it stands. Of course, it is plain, even in this account, on what side Mr. Watson's sympathies are. Cobbett's account of the affair was a little different from Mr. Watson's; for he declares that Hobhouse was a cipher compared with himself, and that Sir Francis Burdett was "a wriggling, twisting, shuffling, whimpering, canting culprit," who would have been thrown out of the window had he not interfered to protect him! Which gave the most correct version of the affair I cannot now tell; but it must be confessed that Cobbett, in the heat of political controversy, sometimes grossly misrepresented his opponents, and it is by no means improbable that he overstated his importance on this occasion. But who that has had to write and speak constantly in the thick of political

warfare has been always correct in his statements? Who has never overstepped the limits of propriety? For my part, I have little sympathy with faultless men; and I thoroughly sympathize with the feelings of that writer—I think it was Theodore Parker—who expressed great delight on finding that even George Washington swore some good round oaths. Notwithstanding his faults, Cobbett was a brave, true man, who can afford to have his sins of commission as well as of omission fairly told.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

ANOTHER PROSECUTION.—VICTORY AT LAST!—PARALLEL BETWEEN ENGLAND AFTER THE NAPOLEONIC WARS AND THE UNITED STATES AFTER THE CIVIL WAR.

ONCE more the government attempted to lay hands upon him; another prosecution for sedition was begun. This time it was by a Whig government, and the charge was that of printing and publishing articles calculated to incite the laborers of England to incendiarism. The farm-laborers of England had at this time (1830) become so crazed by want and starvation, so mad with misery, that they committed all manner of excesses; even incendiarism became common among them, and fires blazed throughout the country. Cobbett, in commenting on the deeds of a class of people from whom he himself had sprung, and for whose wrongs and distresses he deeply felt, gave vent to his feelings in such strong and impassioned language, that, as his biographer of 1835 says, “it almost swelled into sedition.”

Let us glance for a moment at the cause of these distresses. The course of events in England between 1815 and 1830 bears such a strong resemblance to that in the

United States between 1865 and 1880, that a student of English affairs during this period might easily have prophesied what would take place in the United States after our long and costly civil war. Unlimited paper-money; high prices and abundance of money; great speculation and flush times; commercial crises; many failures and breaking of banks; depression of trade in all its branches; multitudes thrown out of employment; discussions everywhere as to the cause of the bad times; talk about repudiating the debt; schemes for paying it off; plans for returning to specie payments; the funding of the debt; reducing the interest; general fall in prices and reduction of salaries; hard times and low prices; return to specie payments; retrenchment everywhere; revival of agricultural and commercial industry; renewal of manufacturing and shipping business, etc., etc.—all these well-known scenes are portrayed in the columns of the Register for these years. Might not a prudent merchant or speculator, as well as the statesman, be able to profit by a knowledge of this history? Might not any man be thus enabled to forecast future events, and “profit by the example?”

While the war is going on, there is immense commercial activity and prosperity among the manufacturing classes; for the government needs millions of dollars' worth of goods of every possible description to supply the armies in the field; so there is abundance of work, plenty of money in circulation, and thousands make fortunes;—but it is *after* the war that the reckoning comes; then the bills must be paid; then the suffering begins; and just when many people, good easy souls, suppose that good times are coming, the worst of all times is at hand! England contracted a debt of 800,000,000 pounds sterling in the Napoleonic wars, and the people have had to pay the interest of this vast sum ever since, some 26,000,000 pounds a year, and will no doubt have to go

on paying this or a larger sum for many centuries to come. Will they ever get rid of the principal?

Well, Cobbett was to be tried for showing sympathy with these distressed, overtaxed, and crime-committing farm-laborers. As in former cases, Cobbett undertook his own defence, and this time he entered the court-room accompanied by his four sons, all tall fellows like himself. In the indictment, he was termed *a laborer*, and he annoyed the Attorney-General, Lord Denman, very much, by insisting that his lordship should, in his comments on the case, call him *a laborer*. "Lord Tenterden (the Judge) was at times obliged to interfere," says Mr. Watson, "and told him at last that if he would not be silent, he must be removed from the court. 'Unless the Attorney-General call me a laborer,' replied Cobbett, 'I must protest every time.' Denman was annoyed by Cobbett's persistence, and provoked to increased severity of language; so that, in concluding, he almost asked the jury to lay aside all thoughts of mercy." The speech Cobbett made on this occasion, which lasted six hours, is said to have been one of the finest forensic efforts ever made; the enthusiasm he created was irrepressible, and, notwithstanding the prohibition and the warnings of the court, he was vehemently cheered again and again in the course of his speech. The jury, on retiring, found they could not agree; Cobbett was acquitted, and he walked out of Court a free man, having secured a great triumph, in fact almost the only legal triumph he had ever secured. The action of the jury was everywhere applauded, and the intended victim was everywhere congratulated on the result of the trial. Since this trial, the press of England has been free from political prosecutions. I wish the same could be said of the press of Ireland.

## CHAPTER XVII.

WHAT HIS CONTEMPORARIES SAID OF HIM.—COBBETT AND LORD JEFFREY.

HE now pressed one matter of parliamentary reform with all his might, writing and lecturing and speaking all over the country, preparing and educating the people more than any man of his day for the great Reform Parliament of 1832, which passed the Bills that gave emancipation to the Catholics, swept away the rotten boroughs, and greatly extended the right of suffrage. Wherever Cobbett spoke, great crowds assembled to hear him; and the admiration of him by the million seemed to increase and develop itself wherever he went. Even where the prophet is supposed least likely to be honored, his native town, there too Cobbett was invited by his townspeople to a complimentary dinner,—the English are famous for dinners,—on which occasion he pronounced the day the happiest of his life, “though few men,” said he, determined not to be behindhand in anything, “perhaps ever spent so many happy days as myself.”

Mr. Samuel Bamford, who had met him at these reform meetings, gives, in his “*Passages in the Life of a Radical*,” the following description of him, which a writer in the *Quarterly Review* (1843) pronounces very good: “Cobbett I had not seen before. Had I met him anywhere save in that room and on that occasion, I should have taken him for a gentleman farming his own broad estate. He seemed to have that kind of self-possession and ease about him, together with a certain bantering jollity, which are so natural to fast-handed and well-housed lords of the soil. He was, I should suppose, not less than six feet in height; portly, with a fresh, clear, and round cheek, and a small

gray eye, twinkling with good humored archness. He was dressed in a blue coat, yellow swansdown waistcoat, drab kersey breeches, and top-boots. His hair was gray, and his cravat and linen were fine, and very white. He was the perfect representation of what he always wished to be: an English gentleman-farmer."

Cobbett was perhaps at this time the strongest, most marked personality in England. People never spoke of what the Register said, but of what COBBETT said, and the very name of his paper was turned into "THE COBBETT." "Whatever a man's talents, whatever a man's opinions," says Sir Henry Bulwer, "he sought the Register on the day of its appearance with eagerness, and read it with amusement; partly, perhaps, if De Rochefoucauld is right, because whatever his party, he was sure to see his friends abused; but partly, also, because he was sure to find, amidst a great many fictions and abundance of impudence, some felicitous nickname, some excellent piece of practical-looking argument, some capital expressions, and very often some marvelously fine writing, all the finer for being carelessly fine, and exhibiting whatever figure or sentiment it set forth in the simplest as well as in the most striking dress." So successful, so formidable had the Register become, that its opponents had gotten up half a dozen imitations of it; same paper, same type, same size, same headings of matter and so on. But all in vain, the spirit of the master was not in them: they all failed, most of them speedily; for the "counterfeit presentment" found no favor in the eyes of the public.

One may easily see by the letters and writings of his contemporaries how much he was in their mouths, and how frequently his opinions, plans, principles, and character were discussed. "Have you seen Cobbett's last number?" says Coleridge, a strong enemy of his, writing to Washington Allston: "It is the most plausible and the



best written of anything I have seen from his pen, and apparently written in a less fiendish spirit than the average of his weekly effusions. . . . One deep, most deep impression of melancholy did Cobbett's letter to Lord Liverpool leave on my mind—the conviction that, wretch as he is, he is an overmatch in intellect for those in whose hands Providence, in its retributive justice, seems to place the destinies of our country, and who yet rise into respectability when we compare them with their parliamentary opponents.” And again in another letter to the same friend: “THE COBBETT is assuredly a strong and battering production throughout, and in the best bad style of this political rhinoceros, with his coat-of-armor of dry and wet mud, and his one horn of brutal strength on the nose of scorn and hate; not to forget the flaying rasp of his tongue!”

John Wilson, of *Blackood*, repeatedly brings him forward in his *Noctes Ambrosianæ*, and although opposed to his political principles, he unhesitatingly expresses his admiration of the man. In one of his *Noctes*, he has a talk with Jeffrey, of the *Edinburgh Review*, who had written a slashing article on Cobbett, proving of course his shocking inconsistency by comparing his Porcupine Papers of 1794 and his Register of 1807. Wilson turns the tables on the critic in the most admirable manner, by showing that he (the critic) publicly expressed in 1831 the very sentiments he had so vehemently condemned in Cobbett in 1807. “Come, now,” says Wilson to Jeffrey, “fill a huge Homeric bumper of red wine, rich and blameless—that's it, thank ye—and know that your immortal article (on Cobbett), all but the headpiece, which was a flourish, and the tailpiece, which was ferocious abuse, consisted of a clear, logical, analytical examination, and a triumphant, philosophical, unanswerable refutation of the then current arguments for parliamentary reform; of which same identical arguments, *your lordship's speech* in the House of

Commons, in seconding Lord Johnny Russell's great motion of the 1st of March, 1831, *was a really brilliant compact, and nervous RESUMÉ, RIFACCIAMENTO, and HASH.*" Is there any absurdity greater than that of expecting a sensible and consequently progressive man to be always of the same opinion on all subjects? "It is the *duty*, and ought to be the *honor*, of every man," says the great Chatham, "to own his mistake, whenever he discovers it, and to warn others against those frauds which have been too successfully practiced upon himself." Jeffrey, in 1831, had got as far as Cobbett in 1807; but in 1831 Cobbett was far out of sight of Jeffrey, nor would the latter ever have caught up to him.

And here I may mention one other matter, in regard to which Cobbett was far ahead of his countrymen. Buckle maintains, and indeed proves, that all the laws that have ever been made have only tended to hinder and obstruct the wheels of commerce, and that when it is left entirely free it naturally works best and to the greatest advantage of all parties. Cobbett expressed the same opinion long before Buckle was born, although, indeed, I do not know that he was the first to express such an opinion. In his Register for June, 1814, he says: "I disapprove, not only of the proposed Corn-bill, but of any and of every bill or law that has been, or can be, passed upon the subject. I look upon such laws as wholly useless, and as always attended with a greater or less degree of injury to the country. I am of opinion that the trade in corn should always be perfectly free, let its price be what it may; and that the trade in all other products should be the same." It took thirty-two years longer for English legislators to come to the same conclusion.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## COBBETT IN PARLIAMENT.

At last, after the passage of the Reform Bill in 1832, Cobbett was elected to Parliament, becoming one of the two members for Oldham, a flourishing manufacturing town eight miles from Manchester. Having received invitations from the radical parties of Manchester as well as of Oldham to present himself as their candidate for Parliament, he accepted both invitations and stood for both seats; and, after the election, found that although he was defeated in Manchester, he was elected in Oldham. The people of Oldham, he says, gave on this occasion an example of true purity of election; for neither money nor drink had been offered to any of them, nor had any voter been canvassed individually for his vote. One cannot help thinking that if the same conduct had been observed by both parties in other elections at which he had been a candidate, he might have been elected long ago. In the present case, he seems to have been greatly indebted to his colleague, Mr. Fielden, who not only used all his influence to secure his election, but generously put him in a position to show the necessary qualification—an income of £300 a year—to enable him to take his seat. Thus Cobbett finally reached the goal for which he had striven so hard during the latter years of his life.

Before the meeting of Parliament, he made a journey into Ireland and Scotland, in both of which countries he was well received, even Daniel O'Connell, notwithstanding some sharp encounters which had taken place between them, inviting him to his home at Derryman Abbey, which invitation, however, he declined at that time, promising to visit him on some future occasion. He lectured

in various places in Scotland, and was not a little pleased with an address that was presented to him in Edinburgh, signed by about six hundred of the inhabitants (the "busy obscure," Mr. Watson calls them), extolling him as "an uncompromising advocate of the rights of the people."

Cobbett devoted himself to his new duties with his usual steady industry and attention; but his career in Parliament cannot be regarded as a success, for he made several blunders that greatly lessened his influence there and elsewhere, and by no means realized the expectations that were formed of him. He was now an old man, incapable of adapting himself, with the flexibility of youth, to a new career, and being unaccustomed to the forms of parliamentary law and the rules of debate, he was sometimes tripped up by less capable but more practiced members; young debaters who were in swaddling clothes when Cobbett was striking giant blows for reform. His triumphs, too, had been gained mostly by the pen, and although he was by no means a poor speaker, debate was not his forte; he was not accustomed to it; interruptions annoyed him and brought him off his train of thought. Had he, in his youth, like the great orators, practiced public speaking in debating or other societies, he would probably have cut a different figure in Parliament; for as a conversationist, as well as a writer, he had the power of enchaining all listeners. Dr. Blakely speaks of a conversation he had with him lasting eight hours, which, he says, was one of the greatest intellectual treats he had in his life.

In the same way in which some distinguished Commoners are said to have *sunk* into the House of Lords, so may Cobbett be said to have sunk into Parliament; for he carried no measures and had very little influence on those that were carried. The peculiar character of the House of Commons, as an audience, must also be taken into account. Macaulay, who was a member of this same Parliament, and to whom Cobbett was once or twice opposed, gives

this striking description of the House as an audience: "The House of Commons is a place in which I would not promise success to any man. I have great doubts even about Jeffrey. It is the most peculiar audience in the world. I should say that a man's being a good writer, a good orator at the bar, a good mob orator, or a good orator in debating clubs, is rather a reason for expecting him to fail than expecting him to succeed in the House of Commons. A place where Walpole succeeded and Addison failed; where Dundas succeeded and Burke failed; where Peel now succeeds and Mackintosh fails; where Erskine and Scarlett were dinner-bells; where Lawrence and Jekyll, the two wittiest men, or nearly so, of their time, were thought bores, is surely a very strange place."

The House of Commons, too, was a place where Cobbett had few followers, for he was neither Whig nor Tory, and consequently some of his motions were disliked by both parties and voted down by overwhelming majorities. The most imprudent step he took in Parliament,—one which almost completely destroyed his influence there,—was his motion praying his majesty the king to strike out the name of Sir Robert Peel from the list of Privy Counsellors, because that gentleman had proposed a return to specie payments in the year 1819. He pressed the motion to a division, although he might have seen that the House was dead against him, and the result was: for Cobbett 4, and for Peel 298.

Sir Henry Bulwer, who also sat in the same Parliament with Cobbett, thus sums up his career, and describes his appearance and the reception he met with in that body:

"The youthful ploughboy, the private of the Fifty-Fourth, after a variety of vicissitudes, had become a member of the British Legislature. Nor for this had he bowed his knee to any minister, nor served any party, nor administered with ambitious interest to any popular feeling. His pen had been made to serve as a double-edged sword,

which smote alike Whig and Tory, Pitt and Fox, Castle-reagh and Tierney, Canning and Brougham, Wellington and Grey, even Hunt and Warthman. He had sneered at education, at philosophy, and at negro emancipation. He had assailed alike Catholicism and Protestantism; he had respected few feelings that Englishmen respect. Nevertheless, by force of character, by abilities to which he had allowed the full swing of their inclination, he had at last cut his way, unpatronized and poor, through conflicting opinions, into the great council of the British nation. He was there, as he had been through life, an isolated man. He owned no followers, and was owned by none.

“His years surpassed those of any other member who ever came into Parliament for the first time expecting to take an active part in it. He was stout and hale for his time of life, but over sixty, and fast advancing to three-score years and ten. It was an interesting thing to most men who saw him enter the House to have palpably before them the real, living William Cobbett. The generation among which he yet moved had grown up in awe of his name, but few had ever seen the man who bore it. The world had gone for years to the clubs, on Saturday evenings, to find itself lectured by him, abused by him; it had the greatest admiration for his vigorous eloquence, the greatest dread of his scar-inflicting lash; it had been living with him, intimate with him, as it were, but it had not seen him. I speak of the world's majority; for a few persons had met him at county and public meetings, at elections, and also in courts of justice. But to most members of Parliament, the elderly, respectable-looking, red-faced gentleman, in a dust-colored coat, and drab breeches with gaiters, was a strange and almost historical curiosity. Tall and strongly built, but stooping, with sharp eyes, a round and ruddy countenance, smallish features, and a peculiarly cynical mouth, he realized pretty nearly the idea that might have been formed of him.

The manner of his speaking might also have been anticipated. His style in writing was cynical and easy; such it was not unnatural to suppose it might also be in addressing an assembly; and this to a certain extent was the case. He was still colloquial, bitter, with a dry, caustic, and rather drawing delivery, and a rare manner of arguing with facts. To say that he spoke as well as he wrote would be to place him where he was not—among the most effective orators of his time. He had not, as a speaker, the raciness of diction, nor the happiness of illustration, by which he excels as a writer. He wanted also some physical qualifications unnecessary to the writer, but necessary to the orator, and which he might, as a younger man, have naturally possessed or easily acquired. In short, he could not be at that time the powerful personage that he might have been had he taken his seat on the benches where he then was sitting, when many surrounding him were unknown, even unborn." Still, Bulwer thinks he was an effective debater, and "rather a favorite with an audience which is only unforgiving when bored."

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## CHAPTER XIX.

### ILLNESS AND DEATH.

WHEN Parliament was dissolved in 1834, and Sir Robert Peel became Premier, Cobbett was re-elected for Oldham, and he returned to his post, although his health was considerably injured by the entire change of habits which his new position made necessary. It would, perhaps, have been better if he had never been elected to that position; for the late hours, the want of air, the confinement, and the wearisome proceedings of Parliament ill agreed with the habits of a man who had been accustomed all his life to rise at an hour when members of Parliament retire,

and to do his best work in the hours which they devoted to sleep. Had he pursued the even tenor of his way, he would, no doubt, have lived to a good old age, and have done much more service to his country than he ever did in Parliament. I cannot help thinking that, in this respect, his fate had some resemblance to that of our own great editor, Horace Greeley, who resembled Cobbett in many points, and who might have been living to this day had he never received that unfortunate nomination for the presidential chair.

Besides the loss of influence, Cobbett suffered also, according to Trevelyan, a loss in the number of subscribers to his Register; for although he still wrote for it, he could not of course pay so much attention to it as he formerly did, and when *his* contributions failed, all that the subscribers took it for failed.

Long-continued and close attention at the House, when a subject that interested him much (Malt Tax) was under consideration, brought on and intensified a malady in his throat that finally caused his death. Finding that he was ill and unable to speak, he retired to his farm, near Farnham, in Surrey, where, after a few days, he seemed to rally; but, being impatient of confinement, he had himself carried round his farm in order to observe and pass judgment on the work that was doing, and, in the evening, took tea in the open air. During the night he seems to have had a relapse; he became more and more feeble; and at ten minutes after one o'clock, on the 18th of June, 1835, he shut his eyes as if to sleep, leaned back, and expired,—an end, says Bulwer, singularly peaceful for one whose life had been so full of toil and turmoil.

No sooner was the lion dead, than all the world, friends and foes, acknowledged his greatness. The writers for the press broke out in unqualified expressions of regret and of praise, characterizing the man and his work as unique in the history of his time. The *Times* pronounced



him the most extraordinary Englishman of his age, and called him "the last of the Saxons;" the *Morning Chronicle* declared he was one of the most powerful writers that England ever produced, unequalled as an advocate; and the *Standard* acknowledged that he was the first political writer of his age, wholly without a rival since the days of Swift. As for the feelings with which the *people* regarded his death, they were, I think, fitly expressed in some lines written on the occasion by Elliott, the Corn-Law Rhymer:

Oh bear him where the rain can fall,  
And where the winds can blow;  
And let the sun weep o'er his pall,  
As to the grave ye go.

And in some little lone churchyard,  
Beside the growing corn,  
Lay gentle Nature's stern Prose Bard,  
Her mightiest peasant born!

Yes, let the wild-flower wed his grave,  
That bees may murmur near  
When o'er his last home bend the brave,  
And say, "A MAN lies here!"

For Britons honor COBBETT's name,  
Though rashly oft he spoke;  
And none can scorn, and few will blame,  
The low-laid heart of oak.

For when his stormy voice was loud,  
And GUILT quaked at the sound,  
Beneath the frown that shook the PROUD,  
The POOR a shelter found.

Dead Oak, thou liv'st! Thy smitten hands,  
The thunders of thy brow,  
Speak with strange tongues, in many lands,  
And tyrants hear thee now!

## PART IV.

### HIS WORKS, STYLE, AND CHARACTER.

#### CHAPTER I.

##### HOW HE TAUGHT GRAMMAR.

EVERY man has his own experience with books as with other things; and as the world of books is unlimited, and life but too limited, the communication of that experience is sometimes useful, especially to young people. One never forgets those books which have caused the mind to see new things in life, or to see life itself in a new light, and which consequently have had a large share in the formation of one's character; and, on looking back, and recalling the books one has read, one often finds that the important or impression-making books, those which have awakened new feelings and given a new turn to our minds, which have suddenly aroused a thirst for knowledge and helped to make us what we are, are so few that they may be counted on the fingers of one hand. I have sketched the life of a man whose books were to me the source of the first real instruction I ever received. They were the first that excited interest, that roused ambition to learn, and created in me, like Swift's "Tale of a Tub" in Cobbett himself, an intellectual birth, a mental awakening, a rousing from the long sleep of youthful indifference. His grammars were the first of his works that I became acquainted with; and after having struggled in vain with the dry-as-dust and obscure jargon of the old grammarians, I found his works on grammar a perfect

revelation, a source of intellectual enlightenment; full of refreshment as well as of instruction. In youth, I had worked away at conjugations, declensions, parts of speech, and so on, until I acquired a pure horror of the very name of grammar. Cobbett's little English grammar fell into my hands, when lo! astonishing discovery! I found a subject which I had imagined the most wearisome, the most difficult, and the most repulsive in existence, suddenly change its character, and become positively interesting, pleasing, and even amusing! Never was anybody more pleasantly surprised; never was anybody more effectively helped out of difficulty.

I had the same experience with his French grammar, which is almost equally good. Had it not been for that grammar, wherein he displays the same entertaining, captivating style of teaching, applied to a foreign tongue, I should never, I think, have learned the language at all; for I could make neither head nor tail of the old grammars of that language. I knew a young man who, with no other knowledge of French than what he had acquired from this grammar, succeeded in earning a living as a compositor on a French newspaper in Paris, and subsequently in teaching English and German to French boys in the north of France.

No writer of modern times has made the subject of grammar so plain, so intelligible, so interesting, as Cobbett; his books on this subject are almost as fascinating as story-books, and they render easy and pleasant a subject which, in other hands, has been the torment and despair of boys and girls from time immemorial. He divested grammar of all the learned nonsense of the teachers of his time; discarded, so to speak, the old clothes of the Greek and Latin scholars, which all the grammarians had put on one after another, and he gave the subject a new, fresh, pleasing, English dress, capable of being appreciated by every person of common capacity.

Mr. Watson and others censure him for introducing politics into grammar, for making political allusions while treating a subject which has no connection with politics. How little such critics understand of the art of teaching! It is this very practice of his which sharpens the appetite, and gives spice and flavor to an otherwise by no means captivating dish. It is this very practice of his,—of illustrating by striking and piquant examples,—which makes him so successful as a teacher. Those who have studied English grammar by the ordinary school-books know nothing of the subject; they never come to an understanding of it. Take the first hundred men you meet in Wall street, and I will wager anything that ninety of them will not be able to tell which is right, “It is she,” or “It is her.” They do not know what the nominative or the objective case is, because they never could make it out from the incomprehensible language of Green, Brown, and Black. Or take the first hundred letters of the correspondents of any firm in New York, and I will guarantee that ninety of them have gross grammatical errors,—errors which, of course, are not seen by the recipients, because they are as much in darkness on the subject as the writers.

How different from that of ordinary grammarians is the manner in which Cobbett handles this subject! He makes it not only interesting, but as plain as a pikestaff, as clear as daylight. One cannot fail to understand what he means, and one cannot fail to be interested in what he says. “His power of conveying instruction is indeed almost unequalled; he seems rather to woo the reader to learn than to affect to teach; he travels with his pupil over the field of knowledge in which he is engaged, never seeming to forget the steps by which he himself learned. He assumes that nothing is known, and no point is too minute for the most careful investigation. Above all, the pure mother-English in which his instructions are conveyed make him a double teacher, for while the reader is ostensibly re-

ceiving instruction on some subject of rural economy, he is at the same time insensibly imbibing a taste for good sound Saxon English—the very type of the substantial matters whereof the author delights to discourse.” So wrote an appreciative writer in a journal of far-off New Zealand.

The first requisite of a good teacher is to make his lessons interesting and attractive. As soon as a subject becomes interesting, it is being understood; ideas on the subject are entering the brain. Cobbett lent interest to every subject he touched: this is the secret of his success. Of course, introducing politics into grammar is irregular; but it is the irregularity that succeeds; it is like Napoleon’s tactics in Italy, irregular and ridiculous in the eyes of the old-fashioned generals; but it succeeds, and success is the only criterion of excellence in instruction as well as in war.

Cobbett enables the learner to *overcome the difficulties* in grammar, to master the situation, to gain what the “big-wigs” were unable to teach him. Two English noblemen,—Oxford-bred, no doubt,—declared to Moore, the poet, that “they had never read any English grammar until Cobbett’s lately.” And no wonder; other grammars were not fit to read, or not worth reading; they were a confused mass of incomprehensible terms; and probably the very first thing they learned, on reading Cobbett’s grammar, was that they knew nothing of the principles of the language they thought they knew so well. All that Oxford students knew of English grammar was obtained through the study of Greek and Latin, which, like the study of any modern language, is a capital aid in the study of the mother tongue; but the study of these tongues alone will never make any man a good English scholar. Without a proper study of the mother-tongue, by itself, other linguistic attainments are apt only to spoil the student’s native idiomatic speech, by giving it a foreign,

pedantic, and consequently obscure air. This is clearly shown in Cobbett's "Six Lessons," in which he gives amusing specimens of the wretched English then used by the University-bred, Greek-and-Latin-crammed magnificos of England.

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE CHARM OF COBBETT'S STYLE.

THERE is such a strong flavor of egotism, of the personality of the author, in all Cobbett's writings, even those on agriculture and political economy, that they at once attract attention, and create a desire to know more of the man who writes, as well as of the subject of which he writes. And he does not speak of himself because he likes to speak of himself; not at all; but, as Hazlitt says, "because some circumstance that has happened to himself is the best possible illustration of the subject, and he is not the man to shrink from giving the best possible illustration of the subject from a squeamish delicacy. He places us in the same situation with himself, and makes us see all that he sees. There is no blindman's-buff, no conscious hints, no awkward ventriloquism, no testimonials of applause, no abstract senseless self-complacency, no smuggled admiration of his own person by proxy; it is all plain and above board." This entire freedom from affectation or pretence is what makes his egotism so pleasing. It is as natural as the talk of a child, and he is so interesting and pleasing in what he says, that we cannot take offence at it.

His style has been compared to that of Swift, of Defoe, of Franklin, of Paine; but, as the same critic well observes, no great man is exactly like another, and his style is not exactly like any one of these, although it has per-

haps some points of resemblance to each of them. It is characterized by strength, clearness, and vehemence; his words are for the most part Saxon, and he speaks with such earnestness and force that one feels the very heart of the man himself throbbing in every sentence. He is the great awakener, or rather the educational revivalist among writers; the creator of "new departures" in men's lives; the inspirer of interest and love for useful knowledge. Like the story-telling preacher to the youth accustomed to the dull and argumentative sermon-reading pastor,—a surprise and a delight,—so is Cobbett to a new reader; he suddenly rouses his attention and interest, and the now wide-awake reader wonders and regrets that he has been so long asleep, while there are so many beautiful, useful, and pleasing things to be learned.

I know of no writer on educational or political subjects who possesses such a captivating style; who is so stirring and attractive, especially to young people; who invests every thing he touches, even the driest subjects, with such allurements, such interest; who is so pleasantly and instructively autobiographical, so full of striking and fitting illustrations from his own experience; I know of no English writer who uses so few foreign or unfamiliar words, nor any writer who exhibits such an unvarying clearness and correctness in his manner of writing. His language is probably the purest English ever written; plain, downright, forcible, correct. You may read any work of his without the help of a dictionary; there is hardly an English peasant that will fail to understand every word he has written. I find, by actual count, that four-fifths of his words are of Saxon origin; so that, in this respect, none but Swift, Defoe, and Bunyan can be compared to him. Among the hundred volumes of his *Register*, you will search in vain for an obscure passage, or a dull one. The *London Times*, his great enemy, characterized his style as possessing "perspicuity un-

equalled and inimitable; homely muscular vigor; purity, always simple; and raciness, often elegant." I have heard or read somewhere that a distinguished Englishman declared that if he were asked by a foreigner to give him a specimen of PURE ENGLISH, he would cite, not some passage from a university-bred author, but one from the writings of the plain-spoken, self-taught William Cobbett. His language is *real* English; not Latin-English, like Johnson's, nor German-English, like Carlyle's.

He observed sharply and felt deeply, and his speech is the outgrowth of this sharp perception and deep feeling; not at all the result of the study of language or style for its own sake. For he knew nothing of the ancient classics, and cared nothing for any authors except English and French authors.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### COMPARED WITH OTHER POLITICAL WRITERS.

POLITICAL writers are generally but little known during their lifetime and forgotten very soon after their death. I speak of the great editors; as for the mass of newspaper writers, they do not want to be known, nor does the journal for which they write always wish them to be known; for the impersonality of the writer is supposed to be an element of strength to the journal for which he writes. But even the great leader-writers are soon forgotten; for the interest of their writings passes away with the events that inspired them, and they are at last known only to the historical student. Their fame becomes almost like that of the great actors: nothing but their names and a misty tradition of their mighty genius remains to succeeding generations. Black,—Cobbett's *Doctor Black*, at whom he flung many a shaft, and whose bitterest retort



was calling his History of the Reformation "*pig's meat*,"—Black, who edited the *Morning Chronicle* for forty years, and who is said to have furnished ideas to Englishmen for half a century, was very little known during his lifetime, and his writings are now almost as completely forgotten as the compositors who put them in type. Take the writings of the great editors of our own day and country, Raymond, and Bennett, and Greeley;—who now reads any of the ten thousand political articles written by these men, giants of the press as they were? Or, let us take the more carefully worked out leaders of the two great New York weeklies, *Harper's* and the *Nation*—who would ever think of collecting these articles and printing them in book-form?

But with COBBETT, with the writings of WILLIAM COBBETT, the case is different: the man and his writings are still alive, notwithstanding the deadness of the issues and the staleness of the subjects on which he wrote, and will continue to live, as long as free, fearless nature and rugged strength and native elegance are admired. There is something perennially fresh about all that he wrote; every article he penned is still interesting and attractive; and all this comes from his style; his incomparable and inimitable style; his wonderfully strong, living, and life-inspiring style; this is what keeps them alive; for anything that Cobbett touched, like anything touched by the hand of one of the old masters, became permanently valuable, permanently interesting and attractive. His political writings, consisting of about one hundred volumes, are not only valuable to the student of English history, but to the student of English literature; to every man, indeed, who takes an interest in language, and doubly so to any man preparing to become a writer for the press.

## CHAPTER IV.

### HOW HE HANDLED FINANCIAL QUESTIONS.

MR. JOHN STUART MILL, in his Glasgow University Address, says that the most recent historians are so fully aware of the imperfection and partiality of their own accounts or descriptions of past events, that they now "fill their pages with extracts from the original materials, feeling that these extracts are the real history, and that their comments and thread of narrative are only helps toward understanding it." If there is good reason for pursuing this plan in ordinary history, surely the reason must be doubly good in the history of an author, an idea of whose style, thoughts, and aims is to be conveyed. I shall, therefore, make no excuse for giving pretty copious extracts from Cobbett's own writings, in order to show what he was as a writer. Of course, the best plan for a proper acquaintance with an author, is to go to the original documents themselves; but as every reader may not have them at hand, nor have time to make a large acquaintance with them, I shall present some extracts which I think will give an idea of what Cobbett was as a writer; which will, at all events, fully repay his perusal, and perhaps sharpen his appetite for a further acquaintance with that sort of food of which he will here get but a taste.

Open a volume of his political writings at hazard, and take the first article that meets your eye, and you will find yourself almost as much attracted as if you had dropped upon a scene in Shakespeare or Walter Scott. Here, for instance, take this on the dry subject of finance, the Surplus of the Consolidated Fund, Budget of 1805:

"The art of *financiering* consists principally in multiplying and confusing accounts, till at last no one has courage to undertake an examination of them. The way,

therefore, to detect a financier of the Pitt school, is, to fix upon some one point, and that, too, a point as simple as possible in itself, one that will not very easily admit of being disfigured and confused. When my attention was first attracted to the subject of finance, it appeared to me that a gross deception was played off upon the people annually; but an annual exposition of every little wheel, peg, and wire in the immense machine would have been an endless task. I therefore fixed upon one single point, namely, the Surplus of the Consolidated Fund, and upon this point I have steadily followed the two first financiers of the world (as the *Sun* and the *Oracle* call them) from the month of December 1802 to the present day.

“But, first of all, in order to render what I have to say intelligible, it may be necessary to explain what is meant by the words *Consolidated Fund*. Who would not imagine that it was a national resource already realized and set apart? In the common acceptation of the word *fund*, it means something collected together. When we talk of a fund for the purpose of defraying any expense, we never suppose it to depend upon contingencies. If a man tells us that he has formed a fund for a certain object, we think him to mean that he has got so much money together, and that there he keeps it apart for that special purpose. With this notion in their minds, the people, when they talk of the Consolidated Fund, think that the nation has a certain great fund, or stock-purse; and when they hear talk of the *surplus* of this fund, they think that the fund has grown beyond the demands upon it, and that they are in a fair way of becoming as rich as Jews. Whether any of them ever imagine that they shall live to see the day when the overflowings will be distributed amongst them is more than I can say; but some of them, and those political writers, too, regard the Consolidated Fund as intended to pay all the expenses of the nation. . . . And, indeed, who can blame people for adopting such

notions? Why are not the accounts of the nation stated like the accounts of individuals? Why are words and even whole sentences to have a meaning, when applied to national accounts, different from that which they have when applied to the accounts of individuals? What is it that constitutes *cant*? And what are the purposes for which *cant* is used?

“Who would ever imagine that by the Consolidated Fund was meant the money annually received at the Exchequer *for all the permanent taxes of the kingdom*; or, in other words, with an exception not worth noticing here, *the whole income of the nation*, war taxes not excepted? This *fund*, as it is called, is, by several acts of Parliament, appropriated to the paying of the interest upon the national debt, the expenses of the civil list, and the pensions and salaries granted by Parliament; and what remains is called the *surplus* of the Consolidated Fund; which surplus, be it observed, is all that there is, except the war taxes, wherewith to meet the expenses of the army, the navy, the ordnance, and the miscellaneous charges, which four heads amount this year to £43,000,000 sterling, while the famous *surplus* amounts to only £1,200,000, leaving of course £41,000,000 to be raised by war taxes and by loans; and accordingly we see that £16,000,000 in war taxes are counted on, and we have seen a loan made for £20,000,000. Why then confuse and puzzle men by talking about a *fund* and a *surplus*?”

What other writer could or would give such a striking explanation of the Surplus of the Consolidated Fund? And what reader would not ever afterwards have a different idea of the *fund* from what he had before? Would not the much-taxed and ever-loyal Englishman feel, after reading this, as if scales had fallen from his eyes? By the way, there is another fund, almost equally mysterious, called *consols*, which is an abbreviation for *consolidated annuities fund*. This is a FUND that constitutes nearly half

the public DEBT, on which the government pays an annual interest, generally three per cent., but which rises or falls according to the state of the stock-market.

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## CHAPTER V.

### SPOKEN VERSUS WRITTEN LANGUAGE.

THE strong, living, talk-like air which many of his articles possess is no doubt partly owing to the fact that he often dictated his thoughts to an amanuensis—a practice which obtains among editors at the present day—but what he wrote with his own hand is usually of the same character. Nearly all his writings sound as if the man were talking to you face to face; some of them more strikingly so than others. Let me give a single example. The Corporation of the City of London, in 1808, presented an address and humble petition to the king, praying for an inquiry into the humiliating Convention of Cintra, whereby British generals, after their victory at Vimeira, allowed the French army to evacuate Portugal, with all their arms and effects. To which address the king returned rather a curt and unsatisfactory answer, declaring that “it is inconsistent with the principles of British justice to pronounce judgment without previous investigation;” whereupon Cobbett makes the following observations:

“They (the petitioners) were, as the newspapers state, all *graciously* received, and had the honor *to kiss His Majesty’s hand*. What, *all*? All a kiss a-piece? Mr. Waithman, who moved the Address, and who, in making the motion, talked about *Dunkirk* and the *Helder*; did he get a kiss too? I would give a trifle for the ascertaining of this fact. They *kneel*, I think I have heard, when they kiss. This must have been a highly diverting scene to Sir Arthur Wellesley, who was at court, and who, as ap-

pears from the newspapers, was the first person presented to the king on that day, 'upon his return from Portugal upon leave of absence.' He must have enjoyed this scene. The thing was perfect in all its parts. Nothing ever was more so. The Londoners '*most humbly approach*' with a 'most humble and dutiful' expression of 'assurances of attachment to His Majesty's *most sacred* person and *government*;' but then, immediately afterwards, they fall to expressing opinions relative to the Convention in Portugal, and to praying that something or other may be done about it. Whereupon they get a good hearty slap; and then, being of the true breed, they all kneel down and fall to kissing the hand by which it has been bestowed. Towards such people the king certainly acted with great propriety; for, if not only his person was the 'most sacred' person, but his government also the 'most sacred' government; if this was the case, what presumption it was in these citizens to interfere in the exercise of the functions of either! And if this was not the case, then the citizens told a barefaced lie, and, as having done that, were well worthy of the rebuke they received. . . . I am glad, however, that they kissed the king's hand after he had given them what they deserved; because it showed that they were penitent; that they will come to their senses; that they had seen the folly, not to say the impiety, of presuming to dictate to beings the 'most sacred' here below."

All this, however, which is but playful banter, is only preparatory to what is coming; for, on hearing that the petitioners, when they got a great way off, grumbled at the king's answer, notwithstanding they had kneeled down and kissed his hand, he suddenly turns on them in dead earnest, and exclaims:

"What! they now whine and snivel because they are not treated as their fathers were treated? Their fathers were a different sort of men; their fathers would have de-

manded inquiry upon *other* occasions than the present; their fathers knew how to *demand* as well as to *implore*; their fathers were men widely different from them, and therefore they merited and received a treatment widely different. What! is it till now that they have waited to discover that they are not what their fathers were? Do they now complain of the Pitts and Hawkesburys; they who have supported them *in every thing* for so many long and fatal years of decline of national pride and independence? They, who have set up the howl of Jacobin and traitor against every one who dared to move his tongue or his pen in opposition to the acts and designs of the minister of the day? They, who have voted, speechified, and subscribed against every person who talked of freedom? They, who, whether in his making peace or in making war, approved of all, aye, all and every individual act of the late Pitt? Do they now complain of the operation of principles, acted upon by his legitimate heirs and successors? 'Inquiry!' What right have such men to ask for inquiry? They, who have a hundred times voted against the principle of inquiry; they, who have been maintaining, for more than twenty years past, the doctrine of *confidence* and *irresponsibility*; they who have, upon all occasions, represented as disaffected to the *country* every man who has wished for inquiry into the conduct of the government? What right have such men to ask for inquiry *now* in particular; and with what face can they complain that they are sharply rebuked for so doing?

"Pity them, indeed! Not I: they have their just reward. If they had not acted a base and degenerate part for so many years, that which has now happened, that which has now at last urged them to ask for inquiry, never would have happened. It is 'in themselves, and not in their stars, that they are underlings.' . . . Whimpering, whining creatures, as they are, it is truly a pretty jest to hear *them* at this day calling for inquiry! No, no;

they must not hope to succeed in this way. It is too late for them to assume a new character. Oh, the base flatterers! It stirs one's gall to hear their complaints. Is there a man or a woman or a child, in power, or belonging to any one in power, whom they have not eulogized to the skies? Have they not praised *all* that has been done, and all that has been intended to be done, by every set of men who, for the time being, had the expending of the taxes? Is not this the case? No man can deny that it is. Away with them and their complaints, then! Let them howl to the winds!"

If this does not sound like spoken language, and very forcible spoken language too, I do not know what does. At all events, those particular London citizens, to whom he thus addresses himself, must have considered it the most forcible language they were acquainted with, spoken or written.

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## CHAPTER VI.

HOW HE HANDLES THE "BIG WIGS."—BURKE AND ADAM SMITH;  
PITT, FOX, AND PAINE.

THE following attack on two famous men will afford a good idea of his humorous-satirical manner:

"We now come to the *astrologers*, BURKE and ADAM SMITH. The former of these discovered, from the aspect of the stars, I suppose, several years ago, that taxes were like *dews*, which, rising up and forming themselves into clouds, fall again over the country in refreshing showers. This was so delightful a discovery that this philosopher has, from that hour to this, been a great favorite with every set of ministers, and with the whole of the 'Collective Wisdom' in both branches, whether in leaf, flower and fruit-bearing state, or in the winter of opposition.



They all, from Mr. Bennett to Lord Castlereagh, call him, that '*great man*.' Canning calls him 'the departed *sage*;' and you frequently hear them quoting his words with as much reverence and solemnity as a Methodist parson quotes the Bible. This '*great man*' made the discovery about the dews just after Pitt had caused a most refreshing and fructifying shower to fall upon this great Irish adventurer himself, who, for a pretty long life had been opposed to, if not outrageously abusing, Pitt and his predecessors; but who, having become the most fulsome eulogist of Pitt, found fall upon him the contents of a cloud, sucked up from the dews of taxation, and consisting of three thousand pounds a year pension for himself, during life; twelve hundred pounds a year pension for his wife, during her life after him; and two thousand five hundred pounds a year to be paid to his *executors after his death*, one half of it for three lives, and the other half of it for two lives, one of the lives on each half being still in existence; and, of course, the two thousand five hundred pounds being *still paid to those executors!*

"About *seventy thousand pounds* of principal money have dropped out of this cloud, collected together from the dews of taxation! Well may the astrologer be called a '*great man!*' Well may his doctrine have such a multitude of disciples! Well may the Committee appeal to him with regard to another branch of astrology, connected with *agricultural distress*. This doctrine is that 'years of scarcity or plenty do not come alternately, but in *pretty large cycles*, and *irregularly*.' Doctor Adam Smith (most interesting to know!) has made the same discovery. Only to think of a '*pretty large cycle!*' Well; but that is not all. 'These 'cycles' or rounds of years do not come regularly, it seems, but irregularly. You will observe the word *pretty* before large. You will remember that a cycle means a periodical space of time: you will then observe that these periodical spaces of time come irregularly; that

is to say, not periodically ; and then you will, I think, my good lords of the soil, have a jumble in your heads, a confusion of ideas, a bewilderment so complete as to drive out, if anything can, all thoughts of the fundholder. Good God ! to talk cycles of scarcity and of plenty ; to talk about unperiodical periods ; to send you to the stars under the guidance of great Irish and great Scotch philosophers ; when you are wanting to know when and how, in God's name, you should get at your rents !"

As a specimen of satire, I think this is capital ; yet there is nothing in the whole history of Cobbett that surprises me more than his want of appreciation of Adam Smith. It will be remembered he could make nothing of him when he studied his *Wealth of Nations*. Was Smith really too deep for him ? Or was it his style that was displeasing to him ? Or was it because he was a Scotchman ? For Cobbett was, like many Englishmen, very jealous of Scotchmen.

Here is another amusing, though somewhat coarser, attack on two equally famous men.

"When Pitt came into power, in 1784, the debt amounted to £250,000,000 and some odd thousands. The people were, at this time, fools, despicable fools, enough to be divided into two parties, PITTITES and FOXITES ; names taken from two men, the first of whom was made by nature for a showman or an auctioneer, and the latter for a jovial companion of some one who had more money than could well be spent, even on the turf or at the gaming-table. Both had what is very well called the 'gift of the gab ;' both were descended from fathers who had fattened pretty well on the public money ; both were second sons ; Pitt came after his brother, as claimant of the *title* and *perpetual pension* given to his father ; Fox came after his elder brother's son, to the title given to his, and he (Fox) was, and had been from his infancy, a *sinecure placeman*. They were both great talkers ; but, as events

have proved, neither was fit to have the management of a nation's affairs, any more than any two tinselled chaps that you might snatch off a mountebank's stage.

"They were talkers; one was the 'English Cicero' and the other the 'English Demosthenes.' The parsons, and other review and magazine and newspaper writers, placed themselves, some on the side of Cicero, for what was to be *got then*; others on the side of Demosthenes, for what might be *got thereafter*; and thus was the nation noodled along in the belief that it had the two greatest men in the world! Pitt began his career with a project for *paying off* the national debt. Nothing could be more popular. The nation did not consider that it could never be paid off, unless the means came out of its property and labor; that it could not be paid off by legerdemain. However, such was its anxiety to be relieved from the dreadful load, that, like the alarmed patient, it was ready to listen to any quackery. Pitt's scheme was, to raise a million a year in taxes, to form a SINKING FUND, which was to go on accumulating at *compound interest*, and which would *pay off* the debt in forty years! Bravo! 'Heaven-born minister' came from every throat in the kingdom. 'What a man! What a surprising young man!' His father, according to Burke, was ELIJAH, and his son had 'caught the mantle!' The nation is now suffering, and has long to suffer, for its follies of that day. *Demosthenes*, who opposed *Cicero* in everything else, joined him here, and proposed one of the clauses in the famous Bill; and there you heard the old conundrumites congratulating each other that these 'two *great men* had co-operated to bring to perfection *this great national work!*'

"PAINE came soon afterwards, and told them that this scheme was a delusion: that it was taking out of one pocket and putting into the other; that it was like setting a man with a wooden leg to run after a hare, and that the farther the man ran the farther he would be

behind. I demonstrated in 'Paper against Gold' that this scheme was as sheer a piece of folly as was ever invented; and the idea of its ever being capable of lessening the national burdens has, for some years past, been openly ridiculed, even in Parliament itself! After all this, the Scotch talk of a *Doctor* (they are all *doctors*) 'HOMALTON, mon,' who, *only the other day*, made the same discovery! [Is not this English jealousy of the Scotch something like our Southern jealousy of the Yankees?] However, no matter who made the first discovery, it is now discovered that this joint-job of Cicero and Demosthenes was as contemptible a piece of foolery as the world ever witnessed; and that the 'Wisdom of Par-r-r-rr-li-ament' (as great, empty, staring, botheration Pitt used to call it) has, instead of paying off the debt, swelled it up to *four times*, and in reality to *more than four times* its then amount."

There was a time when he, too, was an admirer and follower of both "Cicero" and "Demosthenes," one after the other; but, as this passage sufficiently shows, he got bravely over that. Few men, however, notwithstanding all his faults, are remembered with more kindly feelings than Charles James Fox, whose heart was as noble as his principles and policy were liberal. As for Pitt, it may be said that his whole mistaken policy was owing to the influence of George III., under whom his entire career as minister was passed. The king—notoriously a man of mediocre capacity, at times quite sunk into idiocy—seems to have dominated over him. Had Pitt been a man of real intellectual power and of wide and extensive knowledge, eloquent and persuasive, he would have had no difficulty in moulding the mind of this monarch to his views; but he had no such power or knowledge; and the fact that he did not, or could not, influence the king, proves that he was as impotent and incapable as the king himself. What a humiliating picture the historian Buckle

draws of this miserable king, who reigned over the vast British empire for *sixty* long years: "Every liberal sentiment, every thing approaching to reform, nay, even the mere mention of inquiry, was an abomination in the eyes of that narrow and ignorant prince. Without knowledge, without taste, without even a glimpse of one of the sciences, or a feeling for one of the fine arts, education had done nothing to enlarge a mind which nature had more than usually contracted. Totally ignorant of the history and resources of foreign countries, and barely knowing their geographical position, his information was scarcely more extensive respecting the people over whom he was called to rule. . . . During the sixty years of his reign, he, with the sole exception of Pitt, never willingly admitted to his councils a single man of great ability; not one whose name is associated with any measure of value either in domestic or in foreign policy. Even Pitt only maintained his position in the State by forgetting the lessons of his illustrious father, and abandoning those liberal principles in which he had been educated, and with which he entered public life. Because George III. hated the idea of reform, Pitt not only relinquished what he had before declared to be necessary, but did not hesitate to persecute to the death the party with whom he had once associated in order to obtain it. Because George III. looked upon slavery as one of those good old customs which the wisdom of his ancestors had consecrated, Pitt did not dare to use his power for procuring its abolition, but left to his successors the glory of destroying that infamous trade, on the preservation of which his royal master had set his heart. Because George III. detested the French, of whom he knew as much as he knew of the inhabitants of Kamtchatka or of Tibet, Pitt, contrary to his own judgment, engaged in a war with France by which England was seriously imperilled and the English people burdened with a debt that their remotest posterity will

be unable to pay." Is not this single "modern instance" enough to disgust any man with royalty? In the light of these facts, how absurd the conduct of Dr. Johnson appears, in regarding his accidental interview with George III. in the library as something approaching an interview with God Almighty himself!

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## CHAPTER VII.

### COBBETT'S WIT AND HUMOR.—THE DEVIL IN AN ENGLISH PARADISE.

ALTHOUGH Cobbett was generally in downright earnest about all he undertook, he often hit off an opponent in a laughing, bantering way that was far more effective than serious attack. Here are two amusing examples from his *Rural Rides*. He is speaking of the game-laws, and of a poor poacher that had been shot.

"Yet, admire with me, Reader, the singular turn of the mind of SIR JAMES MACKINTOSH, whose whole soul appears to have been long bent on the 'amelioration of the penal code,' and who has never said one single word about this *new and most terrible* part of it! Sir James, after years of incessant toil, has, I believe, succeeded in getting a repeal of the laws for the punishment of '*witchcraft*,' of the very existence of which laws the public was unacquainted. But the devil a word has he said about the game-laws, which put into the jails a full *third part* of the prisoners, and to hold which prisoners the jails have actually been enlarged in all parts of the country. Singular turn of mind! Singular '*humanity*!' Ah, Sir James knows very well what he is about! He understands the mind of his constituents at Kingsborough too well to meddle with game-laws. He has a '*friend*,' I dare say, that knows more about game-laws than he does. However, the

poor *witches* are safe; thank Sir James for that. Mr. Carlisle's sister and Mrs. Wright are in jail, and *may be there for life*; but the poor *witches* are safe! No hypocrite; no base pretender to religion; no atrocious, savage, black-hearted wretch, who would murder half mankind rather than not live on the labors of others; no monster of this kind can persecute the poor *witches*, thanks to Sir James, who has obtained security for them in all their rides through the air, and in all their sailings upon the horse-ponds!"

Is not the following much more amusing than the silly misspelled witticisms of our modern comic writers? Those squeamish and over-delicate people, however, who cannot bear to hear of trousers under any other name than "unmentionables" or "inexpressibles," or of legs under any other name than "limbs," had better skip this passage; it is not suitable for them; it may shock their sensitive, Watson-like nerves. Cobbett, who was eminently a clean-minded and clean-lived man, who never penned an indecent joke in his life, had no feelings but contempt for people who were afraid to call a spade a spade.

"This is a great *nut* year. I saw them hanging very thick on the wayside, during a great part of this day's ride; and they put me in mind of the old saying, 'A great *nut* year a great *bastard* year;' that is to say, the succeeding year is a great year for bastards. I once asked a farmer who had often been overseer of the poor, whether he really thought there was any ground for this old saying, or whether he thought it was mere banter. He said he was sure there were *good grounds* for it; and he even cited instances in proof, and mentioned one particular year, in which there were *four times* as many bastards as had ever been born in the parish before; an effect which he ascribed solely to the crop of nuts of the year before. Now, if this be the case, ought not Parson Malthus, Lawyer Scarlett, and the rest of the tribe, to turn their atten-

tion to the nut trees? The *Vice Society*, too, with that holy man Wilberforce at its head, ought to look out sharp after these mischievous nut trees. A law to cause them all to be grubbed up and thrown into the fire would certainly be far less unreasonably than many things which we have seen and heard of."

These Rural Rides are easy, natural, chatty reports of what he saw while traveling on horseback through the various counties, towns, villages, and hamlets of England. "My object," he says, "was not to see inns and turn-pike roads, but to see the country, to see the farmers at home, and to see the laborers in the fields; and to do this, you must go either on foot or on horseback. With a gig, you cannot get about amongst bye-lanes, and across fields, through bridle-ways and hunting-gates; and to tramp it is too slow, leaving the labor out of the question, and that is not a trifle."

A more pleasant and profitable way of seeing a country can hardly be imagined; nor a more pleasant description of it than that given in the Rides. But his account is now out of date, as he regards everything from a political point of view, and many of the things he speaks of exist no longer. He gives, as I said, a political twist to everything, even a beautiful landscape or the whooping-cough.

"This pretty valley of Chilworth has a run of water which comes out of the high hills, and which occasionally spreads into a pond; so that there is, in fact, a series of ponds connected by this run of water. This valley, which seems to have been created by a bountiful Providence as one of the choicest retreats of man, which seems formed for a scene of innocence and happiness, has been, by ungrateful man, so perverted as to make it instrumental in effecting two of the most damnable purposes; in carrying into execution two of the most wicked inventions that ever sprang from the mind of man under the influence of the devil! namely, the making of *gunpowder* and of *bank-*



*notes.* Here in this tranquil spot, where the nightingales are to be heard earlier and later in the year than in any other part of England; where the first bursting of the buds is seen in spring; where no rigor of season can ever be felt; where everything seems formed for precluding the very thought of wickedness; this spot has the devil fixed on as one of the seats of his grand manufactory, and perverse and ungrateful man not only lends him his aid, but lends it cheerfully. . . . To think that the springs which God has commanded to flow from the sides of these happy hills for the comfort and the delight of man; to think that these springs should be perverted into means of spreading misery over a whole nation; and that, too, under the base and hypocritical pretence of promoting its *credit* and maintaining its *honor* and *faith!*" . . .

"Ever since the middle of March, I have been trying remedies for the whooping-cough, and have, I believe, tried everything, except riding, wet to the skin, two or three hours amongst the clouds on the South Downs. This remedy is now *under trial*; or, as Lord Liverpool said, the other day of the Irish Tithe Bill, it is '*under experiment*.' I am treating my disorder (with better success, I hope), in somewhat the same way that the pretty fellows at Whitehall treat the disorders of poor Ireland."

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## CHAPTER VIII.

HOW COBBETT COULD PRAISE.—INTERVIEW WITH A CHIMNEY-SWEEP.—CANNING'S "INSTINCTIVE PATRIOTISM."

HEARTILY and unsparingly as Cobbett could lash those whom he thought wrong, he could praise with equal heartiness those whom he thought right. The following pleasing passage from the Rural Rides will show this pretty plainly. He is speaking of an estate called Weston

Grove, near Netley Abbey, and of its owner, Mr. Chamberlayne:

“Every thing that Nature can do has been done here; and money most judiciously employed, has come to her assistance. Here are a thousand things to give pleasure to any rational mind; but there is one thing which, in my estimation, surpasses, in the pleasure of contemplating, all the lawns and all the groves, and all the gardens and all the game, and everything else; and that is, the real unaffected goodness of the owner of the estate. He is member of Parliament for Southampton; he has other fine estates; he has great talents; he is much admired by all who know him; but he has done more by his justice, by his just way of thinking with regard to the laboring people, than in all other ways put together. This was nothing new to me, for I was well informed of it several years ago, though I had never heard him speak of it in my life. When he came to this place, the common wages of day-laboring men were thirteen shillings a week, and the wages of carpenters, bricklayers, and other mechanics were in proportion. These wages he has given, from that time to this, without any abatement whatever. With these wages a man can live, having at the same time other advantages attending the working for such a man as Mr. Chamberlayne. He has got less money in his bags than he would have had if he had ground men down in their wages; but if his sleep be not sounder than that of the close-fisted wretch that can walk over grass and gravel, kept in order by a poor creature who is half-starved; if his sleep be not sounder than the sleep of such a wretch, then all that we have been taught is false, and there is no difference between the man who feeds and the man who starves the poor. . . .

“I know of no county where the poor are worse treated than in many parts of this county of Hants. It is good to know of one instance in which they are well treated; and

I deem it a real honor to be under the roof of him who has uniformly set so laudable an example in this most important concern. What are all his riches to me? They form no title to my respect. 'Tis not for me to set myself up in judgment as to his taste, his learning, his various qualities and endowments; but of these, his unequivocal works, I am a competent judge. I know how much good he must do; and there is a great satisfaction in reflecting on the great happiness he must feel when, laying his head upon his pillow of a cold and dreary winter night, he reflects that there are scores—aye, scores upon scores—of his country people, of his poor neighbors, of those whom the Scripture denominates his brethren, who have been enabled, through him, to retire to a warm bed after spending a cheerful evening, and taking a full meal by the side of their own fire. People may say what they will about happiness, but I can figure to myself no happiness surpassing that of the man who falls to sleep with reflections like these in his mind.

“Now, observe, it is a duty on my part to relate what I have here related of Mr. Chamberlayne; not a duty towards *him*, for I can do him no good by it, and I do most sincerely believe that both he and his equally benevolent sister would rather that their goodness remained unproclaimed; but it is a duty towards my country, and particularly towards my readers. Here is a striking and a most valuable practical example. Here is a whole neighborhood of laborers living as they ought to live; enjoying that happiness which is the just reward of their toil. And shall I suppress facts so honorable to those who are the causes of this happiness—facts so interesting in themselves, and so likely to be useful in the way of example; shall I do this, aye, and besides this, tacitly give a false account of Weston Grove, from the stupid and cowardly fear of being accused of flattering a rich man?”

In order to illustrate his argument, Cobbett often hap-

pily avails himself of some passing incident, some accidental circumstance occurring while he is writing. This is the way in which a competent teacher conveys instruction: he seizes upon whatever is nearest at hand to illustrate or enforce the matter in consideration. While showing (1821) that prices are falling; that the reduction of wages is ceasing; that the laborer is getting his due again; and “that the employer will never be able to get him down in proportion to the fall in food”—(in fact, the very state of things which recently presented itself in the United States)—he illustrates the subject by the following incident:

“Only this very morning, a chimney-sweeper, who had swept my kitchen-chimney, came to my study (none of the rest of the family being up) to be paid his *eighteen pence*.

“‘Eighteen pence! Is not that a good deal?’ ‘I have had that price *for years* for sweeping that chimney.’

“‘Yes; and that’s the very reason why you ought not to have so much *now*.’ ‘Why so, sir?’

“‘Why? Why, eighteen pence will now buy twice as much bread as it bought then.’ ‘*I don’t know anything about that*, sir; but, then, think of the *soot*!’

“‘Soot! what is the *soot* to me. You have it now, and you could no more than have it before.’ ‘Aye, sir, but I used to sell it for 20*d.* a bushel. I used to have it bought up faster than I could get it; and now I have got wagon-loads, and can not get 7*d.* for it.’

“‘So, then, as sweep you gain, and as soot-merchant you lose.’ ‘Just so, sir.’

“‘Here, then, take your eighteen pence. But (calling him back) what do people do without your soot now?’ ‘I don’t know, I’m sure; but I ’spose they have got no money, now things be *low*, and that they pay men *in victuals*, and till the ground more, and don’t buy soot.’

“‘There! there!’ said I, ‘say no more; you are no

sweep, you are a philosopher. Go; go to SCARLETT! for God's sake go to SCARLETT!' 'Scarlett!' said he.

"'Aye,' said I, 'it is not any thing of that *color*; it is a *man*; and his dress very much resembles yours, except his *wig*, which ought to have under it a little of what you have got in that black head of yours.' 'Oh,' said he, drawing down his chin, turning up the whites of his eyes, and smiling, 'I 'spose you mean a *lawyer*!' And giving himself a gentle turn, as much as to say, 'no, thank ye!' off he walked to his soot-bag, with his 18*d.* in his pocket."

How often has Cobbett exposed the confusion of ideas, the incoherent jumbling of unsuitable things, which was so common among the orators of the day! What havoc he made with Johnson's sonorous and pretentious sentences! He had, like Wellington, a remarkable power of detecting the blunders and weaknesses of the enemy. We have seen how strikingly he showed the absurdity of Burke's "*pretty large cycles*;" and many another famous orator he tripped up in a similar manner. When Canning, for instance, spoke of the people's attachment to the soil as "*instinctive patriotism*," Cobbett observed that *instinct* was a quality peculiar to animals, and that such patriotism was really nothing more than a *beast-like* feeling, a *cattle-like* attachment to the earth. "Thus neat-cattle and pigs," says he, "though better fed and lodged in a new situation, are always hankering after the place where they were bred. An 'instinctive patriot' of this sort lately found its way from Botley to Ringwood, in spite of hedges and turnpike roads." We may be sure, Canning never spoke of *instinctive patriotism* after that.

Cobbett thought rightly that the attachment of people to their native country is founded in their love of the laws, the institutions, the fame of that country, or in the value which they set upon the reputation, the security, the freedom from oppression, and the happiness which they derive from belonging to that country. Still we

certainly do love the very soil on which we were born and bred; for there are some people who have nothing else to love in their country, and yet love it all the more for its very misery. What part have the laws, the institutions, the security, and the freedom of his country in the Polander's love of Poland? or, in the Irishman's love of Ireland? It is the associations, the recollections of the happy, youthful days we have spent on native soil, that causes this love. Cobbett elsewhere defines patriotism as having its foundation "in that anxious desire which every man of sound sense and honest nature has to see preserved untarnished the reputation of that country which he is obliged to own, whose name he can never shake off, from whose calamities he may possibly flee, but in all whose disgraces he must inevitably share." If this is true, what deep disgrace every honest Irishman must feel at the endless array of atrocious murders and assassinations that have lately stained the soil of Ireland!

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## CHAPTER IX.

### ANALYSIS OF A PRINCE'S LETTER.

How clearly and sharply he brings out the real significance of the Duke of York's letter to the Speaker of the House of Commons! The reader will remember that the duke was found guilty of clandestinely selling commissions in the army, and appropriating the proceeds to his own use and that of his mistress. I have heard of a Russian grand-duke who, in the late war with Turkey, received from two Jews an enormous sum for securing to them the contract for provisioning the army. Talk of the corruptions of republicans! Why, their pickings are nothing compared with the enormous sweepstakes of these royal rascals. For "tricks that are vain and ways that

are dark," commend me to the gentry of this ilk. The Duke of York, in his letter to the Speaker, declares, "upon his honor, as a prince, his innocence in these corrupt transactions," and that he had not "the slightest knowledge or suspicion that they existed at all," and "confidently hoped" that the House of Commons would not "adopt any proceedings prejudicial to his honor;" yet that if the House should consider his "innocence questionable," he claimed of their justice that he "should not be condemned without trial, or be deprived of the benefit and protection which is afforded to every British subject . . . in the ordinary administration of the law." One of the members spoke of this letter as an attack on the privileges of the House, which was denied by Mr. Perceval, who maintained that the duke merely asserted his innocence, and requested that, should that innocence still be doubted, he might be allowed to go to trial, without any further proceedings against him; in all of which he (Mr. Perceval) saw nothing unconstitutional or improper. Upon which Cobbett remarks:

"No? Well said, Mr. Perceval! It may be 'constitutional,' for that is a very accommodating word; and it may be 'proper' too; but if the letter has any meaning at all in it, it is this: that the House will *do wrong*, that they will be guilty of an act of injustice, if they take *any step* in the business *prejudicial* to the duke; and that, at most, they ought to leave his conduct to be judged of by others than themselves. This, indeed, is admitted by Mr. Perceval; it can not be denied; and if this be not dictating to the House what they ought, or rather what they ought not, to do, I know not the meaning of the word *dictate*. There may have been letters sent by accused persons to the House of Commons, but I defy Mr. Perceval to produce an instance of such a letter as this; a letter expressing a 'confident hope' that the House, who have taken evidence upon the case, will not, to the *prejudice*

of the accused, proceed to any step grounded upon that evidence. Then, observe, the whole of the evidence taken by the House, and many parts of which great numbers of the members have expressly declared to be unshaken,—the whole of this evidence, in a lump, not excepting even that contained in his own letters and note, is branded as false by the party accused. He presumes, before the summing up has taken place in the House, to tell them how they ought to decide upon the quality of the evidence; he, upon his bare word, and without pretending to possess the means of *proving* what he says, takes upon him to tell the House that they ought to regard as a liar every person who has given evidence against him! . . . Well, the duke has had *his wish* in regard to the *mode of inquiry*. The inquiry is over. It has taken place. It is closed. And what does *he* now, in his own name, and under his own hand, tell this same House of Commons? Why, that he has thus far been ‘deprived,’ aye, ‘*deprived*,’ of what Mr. Wardle and Mr. Wilberforce and Mr. Folkestone, contrary to his wishes, expressed by Mr. Perceval, wanted him to have; and, upon the ground of this deprivation, amongst other grounds, he desires the House not to adopt any proceeding *prejudicial to his honor*, though he appears to have no sort of objection to their *acquitting him*. This, I think, does very far surpass everything of the sort that I ever heard of in all my life. I have seen many remarkable instances of the presumption of power; but anything like this, or nearly approaching a resemblance to it, I never before witnessed.”

The duke and his friends, no doubt, thought the very same thing of the presumption of the press; and they lost no time in causing an editor who dared to speak so presumptuously of a person of such high character to be put in his proper place, viz., a dungeon.



## CHAPTER X.

## HIS DEFENCE OF THE LABORING CLASSES.

ALTHOUGH politics was Cobbett's chief study, there is nothing that he loved better, nothing that he was better acquainted with, than agriculture. He was very fond of books on agriculture; of agricultural experiments; of introducing exotic plants into England; of initiating his children into all the mysteries of agriculture. And—as has been observed by his biographer of 1835—among all his political and personal changes, among all his variations of creed and company, there is one class that he ever faithfully adhered to, on whose side he ever battled bravely, in whose interest he spent almost the last hours of life—the tillers of the soil, the farmers and farm-laborers of England. In the interest of this class his very best and most effective writings were produced; for there was nothing he thought more of, nothing he appreciated more highly (as we have seen in his praise of Mr. Chamberlayne), than the improvement of the conditions of the laboring poor; and he never wrote better than when he explained or described something connected with farming or the life of the farmer.

“It was natural that rural affairs,” says Mr. Edward Smith, “in which he delighted, and amongst which he heartily believed that the highest domestic felicity was to be found, should derive from his pen the highest charms. There never lived, probably, a writer equal to Cobbett in rural description: one who could, in the midst of some angry polemic, so readily turn off for a moment and present his reader with a country picture; perfectly life-like, glowing with color and realism; who could make a mere gardening-book entertaining.”

No sooner does he come to speak of the farmer than he instantly displays an earnestness, a solicitude for his wel-

fare, that betrays a direct, a personal interest in him. Take, for example, the following passage from his Letter to Mr. Hayes, which is the last of our extended quotations, and which, I think, cannot be surpassed for force of expression, clearness of statement, and vehemence of feeling:

“Let us hope that this Bill [Lawyer Scarlett’s Celibacy Bill, 1821, which was intended to check the breeding of children] is the last of the unnatural offspring of that accursed paper-money system, which has, as I have clearly proved, starved and degraded the laboring classes of England. Many thousands who have supported this system have not been aware of the manner in which it worked, and from these I will not be so unjust as to exempt the ministers themselves, Pitt and all; for it is impossible to believe that human beings could have intentionally invented and fostered so cruel and hellish a system. The ministers are doing all they can do to restore us to happiness; for to talk of *happiness*, national *prosperity* and *happiness*, while millions are in a state of starvation and degradation, is almost blasphemy. The ministers, in spite of all the base endeavors to intimidate them, have given us *gold* and a return to a *just balance for the laborer*. . . . As for me, who has so much to *forgive* as I have? Who has been so persecuted by this long train of Pittite ministers? Yet, so grateful do I feel for the good now done to the laboring classes, that I freely forgive them; yea, Sidmouth and all; and I am not a little pleased at the thought that he (Canning) who made a jest of ‘the revered and *ruptured* Ogden,’ has withdrawn himself from all participation in this forgiveness-demanding spirit. The ministers may, nay they *must* have been *deceived*; they were dazzled with the *splendid effects* of a plunder of the laboring classes. I, myself, in the early part of my writing life, was deceived in the same way; but when, in 1814, I revisited the English laborer’s dwelling, and that,

too, after having so recently witnessed the happiness of laborers in America; when I saw that the *clock* was gone; that even the *Sunday coat* was gone; when I saw that those whom I had known the most neat, cheerful, and happy beings on earth, and these my own countrymen, too, had become the most wretched and forlorn of human beings, I looked seriously and inquired patiently into the matter; and this inquiry into the causes of an effect which had so deep an impression on my mind, led to that series of exertions which have *occupied my whole life since that time*, to better the lot of the laborers. The unprincipled, malignant, and brazen villains, who fatten under the wings of corruption, have accused me of *inconsistency*. There are the *thirty-eight* volumes of the Register. Let *them* say whether I have not constantly been laboring, for nineteen years, to effect such a change as should tend to restore the laboring classes to a state of happiness. Let those volumes say whether I have been fickle; whether I have changed and chopped about. Let those volumes say whether the great and ever prevailing burden of my complaints has not been, *the ruin, the starvation, the degradation, of the English laboring classes* by the means of taxation co-operating with an infernal paper-money system. For many reasons have I hated and detested the system. I have hated it because it gave a predominance to suddenly-acquired wealth; because it caused Jews, jobbers, loan-mongers, East India adventurers, and all sorts of vermin to come and domineer over the people; because it destroyed English hospitality; because it took from the people their natural magistrates and put unfeeling wretches in their stead; because, to answer its fiscal purposes, it took away, in numerous cases, the trial by jury; because it hardened all the laws; because it made thousands the victims of irresistible temptation to imitate the base fabric of paper-money; because it engendered a race of spies and informers so abhorrent to the English

heart: for these, and many other reasons, I have detested the system; but my great and never-ceasing subject of complaint has been *that it starved and degraded the laboring classes of England*.

"To this great sin of the system I have hung like a bull-dog; for the whole nineteen years I have never quitted my hold. And at last I see the object of my labors about to be accomplished. I have never been actuated by any *party* motive; never have felt hostility to the Government, *as government*; never have I desired to see, but always have desired not to see, a *revolution* in the bad sense of the word. But I have been, and I am, for *anything* that will restore the laboring classes to that happiness which I, in my youth, saw them enjoy, and which I enjoyed with them. If the laboring classes be to perish, perish, I say, the whole nation!"

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## CHAPTER XI.

### HIS FAMOUS "HISTORY OF THE REFORMATION."

COBBETT's favorite form of address is the letter; his grammars, his histories, his political articles, are all put into this form. He loved to have some individual, some representative or marked person, to whom he could speak; the general public was too vague for him. It cannot be denied that this form of address has some advantages over that of addressing the public in general: the text for the discourse is furnished; the aim or object is direct and plain; the point of view is distinctly marked and limited; the interest is heightened. If a public man made a remarkable speech, or did a remarkable deed, Cobbett, instead of giving the substance of the speech, or recording the deed, and commenting on it impersonally, addressed a letter to the speaker or doer himself, in which

he singled out whatever he thought praiseworthy or blameworthy, and spoke his mind to the party as freely and openly as if he had been talking face to face with him; with the advantage of having all the talk on his own side. There is, besides, a direct interest for the reader in a composition of this character; for there is something of the nature of a challenge or personal encounter in it. How striking and piquant most of those letters are! No matter to whom addressed, or what the object aimed at; no matter how dry or insipid the subject, Cobbett's facile pen clothed the person and the subject with interest, and lent freshness and flavor to all he touched.

Cobbett's most famous book, the one of which the most copies have been sold, and which has been translated into many languages, is also in the form of letters: I refer to his *History of the Reformation in England*, which is addressed to "all sensible and just Englishmen." Notwithstanding its fame and popularity among a certain class, this history is, in my opinion, the work that does least credit to his literary reputation, and least honor to his knowledge, judgment, and truthfulness. It has been said of Cobbett that it was enough for him to get a thorough grip of one side of a question; about the other side he did not trouble himself.\* This is true, it must be confessed, with respect to many of his writings; but in none is this peculiarity so strongly marked, so strikingly displayed as in this his so-called *History of the Reformation*. He here shows himself not only one-sided, partisan, and narrow in his views; but virulent and unfair in his assertions. He is the impassioned advocate of the Catholics, forgetting everything but his clients, earnestly and vehemently pleading for them, and moving heaven and earth to prove them saints, and their opponents devils; not an impartial historian, faithfully recording the facts of his-

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\* *Encyclopedia Britannica*: art. Cobbett.

tory. He goes beyond all proper bounds in his denunciation of some characters and in his praises of others; and his denunciations are levelled against those who have, by nearly all other historians, been considered worthy of esteem, and his praises are of those who have, by nearly all other historians, been considered worthy of reprobation. This is characteristic of him; for he never went half-way in anything, and he always had a strong inclination to attack and condemn what all the world praised. His denunciations are passionate, sweeping, violent; there is not a particle of goodness or truth in those he condemns, and nothing but virtue and saintliness in those he praises. He could see nothing in all the Reformers but a parcel of plunder-loving scoundrels, and nothing in all the Romish leaders but a body of the most pure-minded, philanthropic, disinterested, and saintly citizens. In fact, there probably never was produced a more one-sided, unmitigatedly partial performance than this book of Cobbett's; nor is there any other work containing so many coarse epithets, so many bitter, scathing, scorching denunciations of men and measures. He is constantly boiling over with rage at the destroyers of monasteries and nunneries, and condemns them with an unsparingness of abuse and vehemence of language unparalleled by any writer, ancient or modern. If I should speak in the language of Cobbett himself, I should say that his work was a mean, mercenary, and malignant attack upon men of the noblest, bravest, and manliest character, and that it was crammed with measureless lies and atrocious calumnies, prompted by selfish greed and insatiable vanity.

But this will never do; I must not speak of it in this manner, for I am not at all sure that he had any but laudable motives in writing the book. If we could transport ourselves back to his day and generation, we should perhaps view the matter a little more leniently. He has been accused of selling himself to the pope; of being in

the pay of the Roman Catholics; of aiming at being returned to Parliament from Ireland; and so on; but this is all nonsense. The book was written when Catholics in England were excluded from almost every political privilege, deprived of almost every civil right, and when the great agitation in their favor was at its height. Cobbett sympathized with them, as he did with all who were unfairly dealt with, and he endeavored to help them to their rights by showing Protestant Englishmen that Catholics had done some very noble things in their time, and were not at all such a dangerous class of people as they were supposed to be, and as he himself once supposed them to be. His aim, therefore, seems to have been to help the Catholics to their rights by removing the prejudices against them from the minds of Englishmen; and it is probable that his work aided in causing the passage of the famous Catholic Emancipation Bill, which took place (1829) four years after the publication of his book, and which secured to Catholics most of the privileges enjoyed by Protestants. In the same year that he wrote this work, he wrote an eloquent paper, entitled "Appeal of the Catholics of Ireland to the People of England," which was signed by Mr. O'Gorman, Secretary to the Catholics in Ireland, and which was in this shape extensively published in England. The aim, therefore, was a noble one; its effect was a good one; but the spirit of the work was a false one. It can not be regarded as anything else than a party pamphlet, written in the heat of political discussion. Macaulay's History of England has been sarcastically termed a "huge Whig pamphlet." Cobbett's History of the Reformation may, without any sarcasm at all, be termed a fiercely partisan popish pamphlet. It is composed in a spirit of infatuation: the author is possessed with the idea that all previous historians are villains and scoundrels, who have written for nothing but pay and place, and that he alone is capable of taking an honest, fair view of things: conse-

quently he takes the contrary of nearly all their assertions as nearest the truth.

It is a well-known fact that the ablest men sometimes lose their heads through infatuation at their success. Of this, there cannot be a more striking example than that of our own Senator Conkling, who, on being re-elected to the Senate of the United States, foolishly resigned his seat, with the expectation that he would be immediately returned, and thus compel President Garfield to grant his wishes. Did not success, and overweening pride at his success, cause him to lose his head? Napoleon finally came to believe himself invincible, and refused to listen to reason or argument with reference to his final and fatal expedition to Russia. Cobbett seems to have got into something of the same state of mind when he undertook this ecclesiastical-historical expedition; for he would believe in nothing but his own conceptions on the subject.

Macaulay—who speaks of reading Cobbett “with pleasure, delight, and abhorrence”—supposes that he, like Rousseau, was, in his latter days, possessed with the hallucination that all the world had combined against him, in order to falsify the truth and twist everything wrong. Cobbett, however, knew what he was about; there is no mistaking his meaning; there is, unquestionably, “method in his madness;” and his object is perfectly clear. According to him, all existing things in England are wrong; every change that has been made for the last three hundred years is for the worse; the age when Catholicism was supreme was the golden age in England; the people had plenty to eat; there was no beggary, no pauperism, no crime; the physical and moral condition of the people was far better than after the Reformation. He does not maintain that Catholic doctrines are superior to Protestant ones; but that the effect of the Catholic ordinances on the people, on their physical and moral welfare, was far superior to that of the Protestant ordinances.



Now, even if this were proved; even if it were demonstrated that the people of England were, in the sixteenth century, physically better off than they were in the beginning of the nineteenth century, it would not amount to much. The latter was the period immediately following the long and exhausting Napoleonic wars, when the English people were crushed by enormous taxes on everything on the earth, under the earth, and in the heavens above; when almost the very air they breathed was taxed to pay the interest on the enormous war debt, incurred by Pitt's incapacity; when, in short, the great mass of the people were turned into a race of paupers through the boundless stupidity of that statesman and his satellites. The Protestant Reformation had nothing whatever to do with this state of things. And as to the material welfare of Protestants and Catholics at the present day, it would not be difficult to point out, in the same country, prosperous and happy Protestant communities in striking contrast with poor and wretched Catholic ones: this, in fact, is the rule; the opposite, the exception. But I do not think that the pleasing picture of a healthy and happy people which Cobbett drew, as the result of his middle-age studies, is at all correct; for those who have studied deeper, who have made a special study of this age, draw a very different picture. Professor Draper, for instance, in his "Intellectual Development of Europe," shows that, through want of knowledge, sanitary and moral; through want of drainage and other modern sanitary improvements; through shrine-cure practices and others equally absurd; through all these, the misery and suffering, the plagues and pestilences, the destitution, disease, and death, amongst the masses of the people in the middle ages, were enormous; so great, that it took five hundred years for the population to double. Whereas, in modern Protestant England—but not in modern Catholic France, or Spain, or Mexico, or South America—the population

doubles every fifty years, notwithstanding the enormous emigration of her people to all parts of the world.

Cobbett failed to see any of the long train of circumstances leading to the Reformation; he failed to see that it was not simply an English but a European movement; that no rulers ever could have carried out and perpetuated such a radical sweeping change unless it was supported, nay, demanded by the people; he failed to see any of the thousand miseries and sufferings endured by the people during the middle-ages; the deep-seated and constantly-increasing dissatisfaction with the priesthood, which reached away back to the time of Wickliffe and Chaucer; the huge murderous dead-weight of the inquisition, which smothered all free thought and prevented all scientific progress; he failed to see the intellectual and spiritual deadness resulting from subserviency to one ecclesiastical system; the necessity of intellectual liberty, of the right of private judgment, and the impossibility of all Europe remaining for ever in one and the same narrow circle of ideas—in short, he failed to see that the causes of the Reformation lay much deeper, and were much longer working, than could be accounted for by the mere caprice or viciousness of the ruler of the day.

Cobbett considered the whole matter in England as the result of the lust and cupidity of Henry VIII., and seems to think that if that monarch had not existed, or had not broken away from the Pope, the Reformation in England would never have taken place. Had he done, had he been able to do, what Macaulay says an historian must do, in order to get a correct idea of any age or people; had he *soaked* his mind with the *literature* of that period; had he made himself thoroughly acquainted with the *original documents* of that period, he would certainly have come to a different conclusion. But Cobbett could not do this, if he would: he had no knowledge of the language, in which all the documents prior to the Reformation, and

many subsequent to it, are written; he knew nothing of Latin; so that all the *real history* of the period was a sealed book to him. Nor had he the time to study this literature, even if he had acquired a knowledge of the language. His eyes were so intensely riveted on the then present state of things in England that he could not see into the past. In fact, he was in every way unfitted for the task; disposition, character, knowledge, leisure, all of these failed in his case; his character and acquirements were all of the wrong sort for an historian, who must be calm, impartial, broadly cultured, master of many languages, capable of the very broadest and most tolerant views, possessing the most patient, the most untiring, the most wide and deep-searching industry. Cobbett was too busy with his various printing, publishing, and political schemes; too busy unmasking the plunderers and place-hunters of his own day, to study original documents and to go deep into the past; he could not possibly find time for such work; so he made up his mind to run full tilt against everything Englishmen had believed in for centuries, to carry all before him in one fell swoop; and he dispatched the history of perhaps the most important period in the world's annals in sixteen letters, written, most likely, in sixteen weeks!

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## CHAPTER XII.

THE SAND-HILL AS AN EDUCATOR.—A PRETTY FAMILY PICTURE.

ONE cannot help wondering what manner of man Cobbett would have made had he received a thorough training in classical or scientific knowledge. Giant as he was in his unaided natural strength, what would he have been, had he undergone in youth a first-class mental drill! I have not a doubt but he would have been a reformer then

too, and a much wiser one, escaping all those fearful blunders he fell into, those raw, unsifted, dogmatic, *outré* theories of his. He would have seen things from a broader, larger point of view, and measured men and their actions with a more liberal gauge than he was accustomed to do. But vain is all speculation; universities do not always produce the best men; they do not always turn out liberal, cultured, and useful men; and Cobbett might indeed have been a much more learned, much more finely cultured man than he was, without being half so useful, had he received a classical education. An apprenticeship to work, hard unceasing work, is sometimes the very best training a young man can receive; for everything depends on the productive character of the man. It is evident that Cobbett himself thought so, too. He went, on one occasion, with one of his sons, to see the school where he got "the rudiments of his education," and he gives this characteristic account of it:

"There is a little hop-garden in which I used to work, when from eight to ten years old; from which I have scores of times run to follow the hounds, leaving the hoe to do the best that it could to destroy the weeds; but the most interesting thing is a sand-hill, which goes from a part of the heath down to the rivulet. As a due mixture of pleasure with toil, I with two brothers used occasionally to disport ourselves, as the lawyers call it, at this sand-hill. Our diversion was this: we used to go to the top of the hill, which was steeper than the roof of a house; one used to draw his arms out of the sleeves of his smock-frock, and lay himself down with his arms by his sides; and then the others, one at head and the other at feet, sent him rolling down the hill, like a barrel or a log of wood. By the time he got to the bottom, his hair, eyes, ears, nose and mouth were all full of this loose sand; then the others took their turn; and at every roll, there was a monstrous peal of laughter.

“I had often told my sons of this while they were very little, and I now took one of them to see the spot. But that was not all. This was the spot where I was receiving my education; and this was the sort of education; and I am perfectly satisfied that if I had not received such an education, or something very much like it; that, if I had been brought up a milksop with a nursery-maid everlastingly at my heels, I should have been at this day as great a fool, as inefficient a mortal, as any of those frivolous idiots that are turned out from Winchester or Westminster school, or from any of those dens of dunces called colleges and universities. It is impossible to say how much I owe to that sand-hill; and I went to return it my thanks for the ability which it probably gave me to be one of the greatest terrors, to one of the greatest and most powerful bodies of knaves and fools, that ever was permitted to afflict this or any other country.”

He endeavored to give the same muscular education to his children, not one of whom did he ever in his life, he says, order to look into a book. Not that he did not value book-knowledge, but he taught them in a manner peculiar to himself. What a contrast the home of *his* children presented to that of some of the children in Dickens's stories! He is speaking, in his Advice, of the taste for the pleasures of the field and the garden, which he had implanted in them: “Luckily these things were treated of in *books* and *pictures* of endless variety; so that, on wet days, in long evenings, these came into play. A large, strong table, in the middle of the room, their mother sitting at her work, used to be surrounded with them; the baby, if big enough, being set up in a high chair. Here were inkstands, pens, pencils, india-rubber, and paper, all in abundance, and every one scrabbled about as he or she pleased. There were prints of animals of all sorts; books treating of them; others treating of gardening, of flowers, of husbandry, of hunting, coursing,

shooting, fishing, planting, and, in short, of everything in regard to which *we had something to do*. One would be trying to imitate a bit of my writing; another drawing the pictures of some of our dogs or horses; a third poking over Bewick's 'Quadrupeds,' and picking out what he said about them; but our book of never-failing resource was the French *Maison Rustique*, or 'Farmhouse,' which, it is said, is the book that first tempted Duquesnois (I think that was the name), the famous physician, in the reign of Louis XIV., to learn to read. . . . What need had we of schools? What need of teachers? What need of *scolding* and *force*, to induce children to read, write, and love books? What need of cards, dice, or of any games to 'kill time,' which, in fact, implant in the infant heart the love of *gaming*, one of the most destructive of all human vices? We did not want to kill time; we were always *busy*, wet weather or dry weather, winter or summer. There was no *force* in any case, no *command*, no *authority*; none of these was ever wanted." Cobbett had the true idea of successful teaching: he *created an interest in things*, and thus caused his scholars *to learn by themselves*. He applied the Pestalozzian method, without ever, perhaps, having heard of Pestalozzi.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### SELF-ESTEEM.—COBBETT'S OPINION OF HIMSELF.

IF a phrenologist had examined Cobbett's cranium, he would surely have found the bump of self-esteem enormously large. Probably no man in England had a better opinion of himself or more confidence in his own abilities than Cobbett. This was one of the causes of his success; for it is not sufficient to have ability, one must have *confidence* in one's ability, in order to succeed. The man of

ability without confidence is generally a failure: a weakling who is pushed aside by rougher and bolder natures: for he never gets into his right place, because he has not the confidence or assurance to take it. Faint heart never won fair lady or fair fortune. I have often regretted that Butler, for instance, the author of *Hudibras*, should have carried this diffidence so far as to allow every undeserving brassy rascal to step in before him, and carry off a portion of the rewards and emoluments which Charles II. showered upon worthless and undeserving favorites, to the neglect of those who had sacrificed their lives and fortunes in bringing about the Restoration. Butler, who had done more to this end than any or all of them put together, stayed over-modestly behind, and remained unnoticed and neglected, until he finally died in poverty and wretchedness.

Cobbett, like Swift, compared his powers with those of the men about him; and, like him, felt that he was superior to most of them. While Swift was serving Sir William Temple as a kind of underling or dependent secretary, he had occasion to see and hear some of the great officers of state, including the king himself, at the house of his patron; and on these occasions he did not fail to take their measure and compare his own powers with theirs. It was here that he first saw that he was capable of great things. This, to me, is an exceedingly interesting episode in his life; and I cannot help picturing in imagination the despised and neglected secretary watching the great men in their high talk and proud bearing, and noting their want of capacity and vain pretension; I cannot help recollecting that while nothing but their names remains, and that their bodies lie mouldering in forgotten graves, Swift and his writings are as familiar as household words, and studied by millions! Cobbett, I imagine, looked upon the officers in the army with pretty much the same feelings that Swift regarded the great politicians at the house of

Sir William; or with which Burns regarded some of the great personages whom he met at Edinburgh. Most men of great abilities do the same thing; that is, discover their abilities by comparison with those of others. But, unlike Cobbett, most of them keep these discoveries to themselves; they do not venture to declare their superiority, or prefer their claims to recognition; and very frequently neither their abilities nor their claims are discovered or recognized until they are under the sod.

Such retiring modesty forms no part of Cobbett's character. He never scruples to proclaim openly that he has greater talents than other public men of his time. He openly declares, and not without reason, that "he is the great enlightener of the people of England;" and in his Letter to Lord Brougham, of July, 1822, he makes this amusing, ingenuous declaration: "Now let me tell you frankly that the very first thing that seriously aroused my indignation [against the Whigs], after my return to England the first time, was seeing you and Horner put into Parliament; while I felt, without any reasoning about the matter, that you were both, as politicians, compared with me, what a seed is compared with an oak." And in an advertisement of his own works, he says: "When I am asked what books a young man or a young woman should read, I always answer, Let him or her read all the works I have written. This does," he continues, "it will doubtless be said, smell of the shop. No matter. It is what I recommend, and experience has taught me that it is my duty to give the recommendation." Is there any other author, of any nationality whatever, who has spoken of his own writings in such a manner? Is there any other writer who has so openly declared his own good opinion of himself and his works? There is no concealment, no keeping back of anything, with Cobbett; his advice is bold, unreserved, open, sincere; it is undoubtedly good; and perhaps, if the truth were known, many another liter-



any man would like to give similar advice; and would do so if he were not afraid of being laughed at for his pains. Had Cobbett written a work which he had projected shortly before his death—"A HISTORY OF MY OWN LIFE, showing the progress of a ploughboy to a seat in Parliament,"—he would no doubt have surpassed all his previous efforts in this direction. What other writer would dare to use such a simile as the following? "And if this [the enlightenment of the people] be really the object of the promoters of these plans, what praise is not due from them to me, who am endeavoring to communicate to the people at large all that I have acquired from a life of application and experience; who am, in short, *endeavoring to take one head, full of useful knowledge, and to clap it safe and sound upon every pair of shoulders in the kingdom!*"\*

Here is a passage which, written shortly before his death, has something pathetic as well as egotistic in it; it is the picture of a scene that sticks to you in spite of yourself; something which, once read, is never forgotten: "I have been lecturing on politics—I have been maintaining my Manchester propositions in every great town in the north, . . . and I have everywhere maintained that, unless those propositions be acted upon to the full extent, a reform of the Parliament will be a delusion and a mockery. Everywhere I have been received with marks of approbation. . . . During my last tour, scores—and I might say, many hundreds of young men, sometimes twenty at a time, have crowded round me as I have been going out of the lecturing places; one saying, as he shook my hand, 'That is the hand that wrote the Grammar;' another, 'That is the hand that wrote the Protestant Reformation;' another, 'That is the hand that wrote the Advice to Young Men.' This was the

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\* Letter to Earl Grosvenor.

case, more or less, at every place where I was. . . . Nor was this confined to the buoyant spirits of Lancashire and Yorkshire, where the heart seems always upon the lips; but I found it the same everywhere."

But I dare not make any more quotations of this nature, for I am afraid of creating a false impression. Mr. Watson collects a number of his most striking egotisms together, and then says, "Such are the flowers of boastfulness that may be plucked from various pages of his writings." Nothing is more apt to give a wrong impression of Cobbett than this. Expressions which, taken singly and alone, appear marvellously presumptuous and boastful, are, in connection with the matters with which they stand, simply effective and pleasing illustrations of his argument, quite in keeping with his general manner, and adding force and piquancy to his observations. Besides, Cobbett had actually done so much with his own single hand, that he had acquired the right of speaking of himself as he did, and of illustrating his subject by examples drawn from his own life. "I have never known a man who was worth much," says Mr. Congdon, in his *Reminiscences of a Journalist*, "or had done anything of importance, who was not apt to overwork the personal pronoun. Our own experiences, thoughts, adventures, failures, and successes are naturally uppermost in our heads and most frequently upon our tongues; and a literary man who has not become accustomed to that 'infirmity of noble minds' must have had but a small circle of literary friends indeed."

## CHAPTER XIV.

HIS FACULTY OF NICK-NAMING.—PECULIARITIES AND ECCENTRICITIES.—CONCLUSION.

COBBETT praised and condemned with equal freedom most of the public men of his time; when they acted as he wished them to act, they were wise, honest, and humane; when the contrary, they were cruel, corrupt, and hypocritical. "When he chose to revile," says Mr. Watson, "one faculty he exerted with great success,—that of nicknaming the objects of his vituperation. 'Old Sir Glory' was his well-applied ridicule of Burdett's title 'Westminster's Pride and England's Glory.' Frederick Robinson, afterwards Lord Goderich, was happily called 'Prosperity Fred,' for his constant promises of good times coming. Egerton Smith, editor of the *Liverpool Mercury* was ludicrously turned into 'Bott Smith,' for the rest of his life, on account of something he had said in allusion to that disease (sic). Mr. Thomas Attwood, from some scheme for reducing the national debt by shillings, was dubbed 'Little Shilling Attwood.' Lord Erskine was 'Baron Clackmannan' (his second title). Lord Liverpool was 'Lord Pinknose Liverpool.' Mr. Hobhouse was 'Sancho Hobhouse.' Henry Hunt, for a time, was 'the great liar of the South,' and Baines 'the great liar of the North.' Mr. Black, of the *Chronicle*, was turned into 'Doctor Black.' The loquacious Brougham was stigmatized as 'a mixture of laudanum and brandy with a double allowance of jaw.' The *Times* was sometimes called 'the bloody old *Times*,' and sometimes 'Annie Brodie,' from one of the shareholders in the paper. Another of his aversions was 'that lump of horse-dung that is called the *Globe*.'" Sir Robert Peel was "Spinning Jenny Peel." Canning was "Aeolus Canning"—a title

that is said to have provoked inextinguishable laughter among high and low—and the Quakers were “the unbaptized, buttonless blackguards.”

Cobbett's power lay wholly in the man himself, in his natural abilities and force of character; he owed very little to his education, which was remarkably limited for a man of such influence. He would have gained a prominent position in almost any station of life; for he was bound to lead, and never could bear to be led by anybody or in anything. As his range of view was limited, so were his aims and objects, which were not of the highest or most intellectual character. The standard by which he measured everything was *usefulness*; and the only valuable things to him were those which produced material or mental improvement, especially the former. As has been said of somebody else, his idea of civilization was sufficient beef, beer, and pudding, shelter and wages; and provided these were attained, he had little regard for anything else. We have seen with what satisfaction he spoke of Mr. Chamberlayne's workmen being able “to retire to a warm bed, after taking a full meal and spending a cheerful evening by the side of their own fire.” To cause all his countrymen to do this was his ideal of happiness. And a much nobler and more generous one it is than that of those who wish to fill their minds with biblical and spiritual knowledge while their bellies are empty and their homes are dreary. When Lord Brougham said he hoped the time would come when every man in England would read Bacon, Cobbett said he would be content if a time would come when every man in England could *eat bacon*. He would have fully appreciated Carlyle's saying of the United States, as expressed to one of his American visitors, “The best thing I know of your country is that a man can get *beef* to eat there.” Cobbett saw no use in poetry or romance; he had no relish for the higher or poetic flights in literature and art; the works

of Shakespeare and Walter Scott, for instance, were entirely superfluous, and the reading of such things a waste of time.

He says that he never once went a-walking with his wife; that is, he never went out with his wife simply for the sake of walking: he always had some *object* ahead when he rode or walked with her or with any one else. This single fact is a sample of his whole activity: his whole career, every act of his whole career, was to attain some useful end; he never spent a moment or wrote a line to promote simply the agreeable or the beautiful; whatever there is agreeable or beautiful in his writings is incidental, not intentional; for all his efforts were singly to further the *materially* useful, to promote the *physical* well-being and comfort of his countrymen. To secure better food, better clothing, better lodging, and greater political freedom for the people of England—the latter in order to secure the former—these were his great objects; and because in the olden times food was cheaper and land more generally owned by the common people than at the present day, he could, though himself a Protestant and a steady adherent of the Church of England, see no good in the Protestant Reformation, which he considered the cause of the misery and destitution of the working classes in his own day.

Cobbett was a man of strong prejudices, strong likings, and dislikings, and accustomed to a strong way of expressing them. He detested the Jews because they were usurers and supporters of tyrants; he was jealous of Scotchmen because of their persistent, pushing industry and superior intelligence; he hated the Edinburgh reviewers and the historian Hume, because they were Tories; he called the reviewers “shuffling sots” and Hume “a mean, mercenary, and malignant liar;” he despised Wilberforce and the anti-slavery people in England because they thought more of the black slaves in Jamaica than of the

white slaves in England; he rightly condemned Napoleon, for his choice in his second marriage, declaring that he ought to have assembled a score of the prettiest girls in France, and chosen one of them for a wife; he had a strong aversion to potatoes and tea and coffee, calling the former the "infamous potato," and the latter "slops;" and prophetically declared that any people that lived on potatoes would be sure, some day, to be the victims of famine; he would have every body eat mutton or bacon and drink ale, even for breakfast; he hated the practice of vaccination, calling it "the beastly cow-pox business," and caused all his children to be innoculated while at the breast; he believed in hunting, boxing, bull-baiting, and the game of single-stick, and offered prizes for the best players; he condemned the wearing of gloves by men as a vain, foolish custom; he despised the public schools of England, calling them "haunts of dullards and dens of drones;" he disapproved of teaching the peasantry to read, because the press was so corrupt they could obtain only false information by reading; and he gave no schooling to his own children till they were well advanced in boyhood or girlhood, and then led them on to a love of learning by spreading books and pictures before them.

His faults and peculiarities, like his merits and excellences, are striking and uncommon; but his merits are so great that we can well afford to look over his faults. "It is not by his faults," says Mr. Lewes, "but by his excellences, that we judge a great man." In many things his example is worthy of imitation, for his life presents much more that is deserving of approbation than of condemnation. And as to his writings, if any man wishes to learn how to write strong, idiomatic, correct English; to reason cogently and convincingly; to make a clear statement of a case, stripped of all that is superfluous; to overcome an opponent by strong arguments, strongly stated; to silence an enemy by radiant exposure of his fallacies, and swift

detection of his inconsistencies, covering him with confusion and ridicule, or nailing him for life to the public pillory by an epithet; if any man wants to become acquainted with that style of attack which inspires enemies with terror and friends with enthusiasm; in which no favors are asked and no quarter is given; in which the writer is bound to win, at all hazards, like Nelson in his battles;—if any man wishes to become familiar with a writer who combines, with all these, rare powers of description and narration, and a fascinating attractiveness of manner that holds spell-bound all who once begin to read his writings, let him turn to the pages of the Political Register, or to any of the forty other works by the same author, and he will be abundantly satisfied.

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1. **THE SOLDIER'S FRIEND**: or considerations on the late pretended augmentation of the subsistence of the private soldiers. "Laws grind the poor, and rich men rule the laws."—GOLDSMITH. Written by a Subaltern. London. Ridgway. 1792, 8vo. 6d.; reprinted in 1793, without printer's or publisher's name. Price 2d., or 100 copies 10s. 6d., pp. 15. [This tract is evidently the work of more than one hand. The style is that of Cobbett; but some of the subject-matter comes from a person well acquainted with the political intrigues of the day.]

2. [*Translation.*] **THE LAWS OF NATIONS**: being the science of national law, covenants, power, etc., founded upon the treaties and customs of modern nations in Europe. By G. F. von Martens, Professor of Public Law in the University of Gottingen. Translated from the French, by William Cobbett. To which is added, a list of the principal treaties, declarations, and other public papers, from the year 1731 to 1738, by the author. Philadelphia, 1794. London edition, 1802, dedicated to John Penn, Esq. Fourth edition, London, 1829, with the treaties, &c., continued by the translator down to Nov. 1815, 8vo, pp. xxxii.—468.

3. **LE TUTEUR ANGLAIS**, ou Grammaire régulière de la langue anglaise, en deux parties. Par William Cobbett. A Philadelphie: chez Thomas Bradford, 1795. 8vo, pp. x.—340. [This book has been reproduced many times in France and Belgium, under the title of "Maître d'Anglais," and has much increased in bulk from time to time. It is still held, in those countries, to be superior to any other book of its kind.]

4. [*Translation.*] A topographical and political description of the Spanish port of Saint Domingo, containing general observations on the climate, population, and productions; on the character and manners of the inhabitants; with an account of the several branches of the government. By M[édéric L[ouis] E[lie] Moreau-de-Saint Méry, Member of the Philosophical Society of Philadelphia, &c. Translated from the French by William Cobbett. Philadelphia: printed and sold by the Author, Printer and Bookseller, No. 84 South Front Street, 1796. 2 vols. 8vo.

5. [*Appendix only.*] **THE HISTORY OF JACOBINISM**. . . . By William Playfair. With an Appendix by Peter Porcupine, showing the close connection which has ever subsisted between the Jacobins at Paris and the Democrats in the United States of America. Philadelphia, 1796. 2 vols. 8vo.

6. **OBSERVATIONS ON PRIESTLEY'S EMIGRATION**, to which is added, A STORY OF A FARMER'S BULL. [*Anonymous.*] Philadelphia, 1794. pp. 88.

7. **A BONE TO GNAW FOR THE DEMOCRATS**. By Peter Porcupine. Philadelphia, Jan. 1795. pp. vi.—66.

8. **A KICK FOR A BITE**. By Peter Porcupine. Philadelphia, Feb. 1795.

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[London edition of [7] and [9] printed for J. Wright, opposite Old Bond Street, Piccadilly 1797; *A Bone to Gnaw for the Democrats*. By Peter Porcupine, Author of the *Bloody Buoy*, &c., &c. To which is prefixed *A Rod for the Backs of the Critics*; containing an historical sketch of the present state of political criticism in Great Britain; as exemplified in the conduct of the monthly, *Critical and Analytical Reviews*, &c., &c. Interspersed with Anecdotes. By Humphrey Hedgehog, 12mo. pp. xcv.—175.]

10. *A LITTLE PLAIN ENGLISH*; addressed to the people of the United States, on the Treaty, and on the conduct of the President relative thereto, in answer to "The Letters of Franklin." By Peter Porcupine. Philadelphia, Aug. 1796. pp. viii.—102.

11. *A NEW YEAR'S GIFT TO THE DEMOCRATS*; or observations on a pamphlet entitled, "*A Vindication of Mr. Randolph's Resignation*." Philadelphia, Jan. 1796. pp. 71.

12. *THE CENSOR*, No. 1: or a Review of Political Occurrences relative to the United States of America. Philadelphia, Jan. 1796. [This number of the 'Censor' was originally called 'The Prospect from the Congress Gallery,' and as such it has been sometimes referred to.]—*Note in collected works.*

13. *THE BLOODY BUOY*, thrown out as a Warning to the Political Pilots of all Nations; or, a faithful relation of a multitude of acts of horrid barbarity, such as the eye never witnessed, the tongue expressed, or the imagination conceived, until the commencement of the French Revolution. To which is added, an instructive Essay, tracing these dreadful effects to their real causes. Philadelphia, 1796. [Among reprints in England, there is one at Cambridge, entitled, "*Annals of Blood; or an Authentic Relation*," &c.]

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16. *THE CENSOR*, No. 4. Philadelphia, May, 1796.

17. *THE SCARE-CROW*; being an infamous letter sent to Mr. John Oldden, threatening destruction to his house, and violence to the person of his tenant, William Cobbett. With remarks on the same. Philadelphia. "From the Free Press of William Cobbett, July 22, 1796."

18. *THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF PETER PORCUPINE*, with a full and fair account of all his authoring transactions; being a sure and infallible guide for all enterprising young men who wish to make a fortune by writing pamphlets.—"Now, you lying varlets, you shall see how a plain tale will put you down."—SHAKESPEARE. Philadelphia, Aug. 1796.

19. *THE CENSOR*, No. 5. Philadelphia, Sept. 1796. [Contents: Life of Thomas Paine, interspersed with remarks and reflections. Remarks on the pamphlets lately published against Peter Porcupine.]

20. *THE GROS MOUSQUETON DIPLOMATIQUE*; or diplomatic blunderbuss. Containing Citizen Adet's notes to the Secretary of State; as also his cockade proclamation, with a preface. Philadelphia, Oct. 1796. [A compilation, with short preface, to pave the way for the next Censor.]

21. *THE CENSOR*, No. 6. Philadelphia, Nov. 1796. [Remarks on the Blunderbuss.]

22. *THE CENSOR*, No. 7. Philadelphia, Dec. 1796. [Contents:—Remarks on the debates in Congress.—A letter to the infamous Tom Paine, in answer to his letter to General Washington.]

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their perfidy, rapacity, ferociousness and brutality, exercised towards the innocent inhabitants of Germany. Abridged from the translation of Anthony Aufrere, Esq. Philadelphia, June, 1798. [Introductory Address, by the Editor.]

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31. THE RUSHLIGHT; by the help of which wayward and disaffected Britons may see a complete specimen of the baseness, dishonesty, ingratitude, and perfidy of Republicans, and of the profligacy, injustice and tyrannical Republican Governments. By Peter Porcupine. Five numbers. New York, Feb.—April, 1800. pp. 258.

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[The contents of the first eleven volumes include those of the above-enumerated publications under articles 6—31, with the addition of complementary matter:—A summary view of the politics of the United States from the close of the war to the year 1794. Account of the insurrection in the western counties of Pennsylvania, in 1794. A summary of the proceedings in Congress, during the session which commenced on the 4th of November, 1794. Proceedings relative to the British treaty. An analysis of Randolph's Vindication. Miscellaneous State Papers [French depredations; Washington's retirement; impeachment of Wm. Blount, &c.] Miscellaneous Anecdotes. Selections from *Porcupine's Gazette*. The twelfth volume contains a series of historical documents and remarks, from Dec. 1799 to March, 1801; some of which are extracted from the London *Porcupine*.]

34. A COLLECTION OF FACTS AND OBSERVATIONS, RELATIVE TO THE PEACE WITH BONAPARTE, chiefly extracted from the *Porcupine*, and including Mr. Cobbett's letters to Lord Hawkesbury. To which is added, an appendix, containing the divers conventions, treaties, state papers, and despatches connected with the subject; together with extracts from the speeches of Mr. Pitt, Mr. Fox and Lord Hawkesbury, respecting Bonaparte and a peace with France. By William Cobbett. London, Nov. 2, 1801. 8vo. pp. 231—lxiii.

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[These two articles [34, 35] were reproduced, in part, under the following title: "Letters to the Right Honourable Lord Hawkesbury, and to the Right Honourable Henry Addington, on the peace with Bonaparte, to which is added an appendix, containing a collection (now greatly enlarged) of all conventions, treaties, speeches and other documents connected with the subject. By William Cobbett. Second Edition. London, January, 1802.]

36. COBBETT'S WEEKLY POLITICAL REGISTER. London, January, 1803—June 1835. [Fortnightly in Jan. 1803, afterwards weekly, except April 12 to July 5, 1817; Mar. 21, May 2, June 27, Aug. 15, Oct. 17, 24, 31, Nov. 7, 14, 1818; Aug. 21, Oct. 16, Nov. 20, 27, 1819; Feb. 26, Mar. 4, 11, 18, 1820—all of which were

raised Price 10s., occasionally is, until Oct. 1833, changed at 50 Jan. 6, 1833 July to October, 1833, republished in cheap form; 3d. from Jan. 23, 1833 to Dec. 1837; 1s. from Jan. 1838, 1s. from Oct. 22, 1839, 1s. 3d. from Jan. 2, 1841.]

The first four vols. Cobbett's Annual Register on title published with supplements of state papers &c. Cobbett's Weekly Political Register, on and after Feb. 13, 1817, again named Cobbett's Weekly Political Register in the following year. Cobbett's Weekly Register on title. 1818. Cobbett's Weekly Political Register, during and after 1818. Many articles were reprinted from the Register, and published separately. The most important were: *Review of the State of Affairs, West, South, Hampshire, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Somersetshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, and Hertfordshire, with accounts and particular observations relative to matters appertaining to, and illustrated by the state of the manufacturing property.* London, 1818. 12mo. pp. 60. *Supplement to the Review of the State of Affairs, &c. in the four northern counties of England.* London, 1818. 12mo. pp. 64. (The Register continued at intervals after Cobbett's death. It appeared as late as 1842, vol. 54.)

37. *Translation.* The Empire of Germany divided into Departments, under the protection of the Elector of — To which is prefixed, a memoir on the political and military state of the continent, written by the same author. Translated from the French by William Cobbett. *Revised by the translator.* London, Jan. 1804. Also printed in the Supplement to vol. 8 of the Register.

38. *Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates.* London, Dec. 1803, &c. (In the year 1813 this work passed into the hands of Mr. T. C. Howard, and new titles were given to all volumes from the commencement issued after that date. — The Parliamentary Debates from the year 1803 to the present time, forming a continuation of the work entitled, The Parliamentary History of England from the earliest period to the present time. — An advertisement inserted in volume 1 of the first volume, explained the alteration to the public. — London, Oct. 1819. Mr. Cobbett having disposed of his interest in this work, it is now continued under the general title of The Parliamentary Debates, — and proceeded to state that the general conduct of the work was not in any respect affected by the alteration.)

39. *The Political Purview.* A view of the public character and conduct of R. B. Sheridan Esq. as exhibited in I. Ten letters to him. II. Selections from his parliamentary speeches from the commencement of the French Revolution. III. Selections from his speeches at the Whig club, and at other public meetings. By William Cobbett. London, Jan. 1804. 8vo. pp. 32. [The letters had previously appeared in the Register.]

40. (Continuation.) Cobbett's Review of the French Journals for the year 1804. London, Jan. 1805. pp. 28. 1819. [Letters, &c., taken from the English, American, and French journals for the year 1804, the subjects being all of that nature which render them interesting to the politician.]

41. Cobbett's Parliamentary History of England from the Norman Conquest, in 1066, to the year 1803, from which last-mentioned epoch it is continued downwards in the work entitled, Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates. London, Oct. 1803. The tenth and succeeding volumes are called, "The Parliamentary History of England."

42. Cobbett's Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings for High Treason and other Crimes and Misdemeanours from the Earliest Period to the Present Time. London, 1800, &c. [After the tenth volume, when Cobbett's interest in the publication had been transferred, the title ran: — "A complete collection . . . to the present time. With notes and other illustrations. Compiled by T. B. Howell Esq. F. R. S. F. S. A. Vols. XXII.—XXXIII.:" . . . and continued from the year 1703 to the present time. By Thomas James Howell Esq. Vol. XXXIV. — General index to . . . By David Jardine Esq., of the Middle Temple, Barrister-at-law."] Vol. XXII.—XXXIII. — . . . and continued from the year 1703 to the present time. By Thomas James Howell Esq. Vol. XXXIV. — General index to . . . By David Jardine Esq., of the Middle Temple, Barrister-at-law."

43. (Payson &c.) An Essay on Slavery intended chiefly to promote the introduction and propagation of mercantile in the United States of America . . . By R. R. Livingston. Printed by order of the Legislature of the State of New York. London, reprinted with a preface and explanatory notes by William Cobbett. 1811.

44. *PAPER AGAINST GOLD, AND GOLD AGAINST PAPER.* CO, AN ANSWER

of the rise, progress, extent, and present state of the funds and of the paper-money of Great Britain: and also of the situation of that country as to its debt and other expenses; its navigation, commerce, and manufactures; its taxes, population and paupers; drawn from authentic documents, and brought down to the end of the year 1814. In two volumes. By William Cobbett. London, 1815. pp. viii.—523, and iv.—100—cxxvii. [The title slightly altered, in a later issue, with an Introduction, dated 1817:—

PAPER AGAINST GOLD; or the History and Mystery of the Bank of England; of the Debt, of the Stocks, of the Sinking Fund, and of all the other tricks and contrivances, carried on by the means of Paper Money. 8vo. Columns viii.—470; and 12mo. pp. xviii.—332. "A Preliminary part of Paper against Gold," consisting of essays written between 1803 and 1806, was published in 1821.]

45. A YEAR'S RESIDENCE IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. Treating of the face of the country, the climate, the soil, the products, the mode of cultivating the land, the prices of lands, of labour, of food, of raiment; of the expenses of housekeeping, and of the usual manner of living; of the manners and customs of the people; and of the institutions of the country, civil, political and religious. In three parts. By William Cobbett; London, 1818. 8vo. pp. viii.—610; also 12mo, pp. 370.

46. A GRAMMAR OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, in a series of letters. Intended for the use of schools and of young persons in general; but, more especially for the use of soldiers, sailors, apprentices and plough-boys. By William Cobbett. London, 1818. pp. iv.—186.

47. COBBETT'S EVENING POST. Daily newspaper. London, January 29.—April 1, 1820.

48. THE AMERICAN GARDENER; or a treatise on the situation, soil, fencing, and laying-out of gardens; on the making and managing of hot-beds and green-houses; and on the propagation and cultivation of the several sorts of table vegetables, herbs, fruits and flowers. London, 1821. Par. 391 (not paged).

49. COBBETT'S MONTHLY RELIGIOUS TRACTS. London, 1821-22; afterwards, TWELVE SERMONS ON, 1. Hypocrisy and Cruelty; 2. Drunkenness; 3. Bribery; 4. The Rights of the Poor; 5. Unjust Judges; 6. The Sluggard; 7. Murder; 8. Gaming; 9. Public robbery; 10. The Unnatural Mother; 11. Forbidding marriage; 12. Parsons and Tithes. To these, was subsequently added: Good Friday, or the murder of Jesus Christ by the Jews, pp. 24. By William Cobbett. 12mo. pp. 295: a later edition, pp. 240.

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52. [*Preface, &c.*] THE HORSE-HOEING HUSBANDRY: or, a treatise on the principles of tillage and vegetation, wherein is taught a method of introducing a sort of vineyard culture into the corn-fields, in order to increase their product and diminish the common expenses. By Jethro Tull, of Shalborne in the County of Berks.

To which is prefixed, an introduction, explanatory of some circumstances connected with the history and division of the work; and containing an account of certain experiments of recent date. By William Cobbett. London, 1822. 8vo. pp. xix.—332.

53. COBBETT'S FRENCH GRAMMAR; or plain instructions for the learning of

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A GRAMMAR  
OF THE  
ENGLISH LANGUAGE,  
IN A SERIES OF LETTERS;

INTENDED FOR THE USE OF SCHOOLS AND OF YOUNG  
PERSONS IN GENERAL, BUT MORE ESPECIALLY  
FOR THE USE OF SOLDIERS, SAILORS,  
APPRENTICES AND PLOUGH-BOYS.

BY  
WILLIAM COBBETT.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

SIX LESSONS, INTENDED TO PREVENT STATESMEN FROM USING  
FALSE GRAMMAR, AND FROM WRITING IN AN  
AWKWARD MANNER.

WITH NOTES BY ROBERT WATERS.



## EDITOR'S PREFACE.

MR. RICHARD GRANT WHITE'S VIEWS; AND SOME OTHER VIEWS.

Among recent writers on language, there is perhaps not one who has written more wisely, or exhibited a finer perception of the true means of acquiring the power of expression, than Mr. Richard Grant White. His two works, "Words and their Uses" and "Every-day English," are marvelously interesting and full of sound, wholesome instruction. These books will, by any one uninformed of his novel views, be read with surprise and even with incredulity; but they cannot fail to impress the reader with the conviction, that they possess a measure of truth which is confirmed by experience. Mr. White condemns as altogether useless, nay, as worse than useless, the grammar studies of our public schools, and recommends the study of *authors* instead of *grammars*.

Now, although I agree in the main with Mr. White's views concerning the character of our tongue, and the unprofitableness of grammar studies in general; although I fully agree with him that our language must be learned, chiefly, from hearing good speakers and reading good writers; still I maintain that THIS IS NOT ENOUGH; that in order to be able to write correctly, and to be SURE that one DOES write correctly, a fair knowledge of well-defined principles is necessary; that the study of these principles, rightly pursued, is not only necessary to enable one to speak and write correctly, but is useful as a discipline of the mind and as a means of general culture. Theory MUST be combined with practice. For although one may, by a large acquaintance with good writers and speakers, acquire a good ear and a discriminating sense of correct language, these are not *infallible* guides; a person with



the finest culture of this kind may commit the most egregious blunders. It is precisely this which is so forcibly displayed by Cobbett in his "Six Lessons"; where he shows that persons of the highest rank, the finest taste, the gentlest training, and the most extensive learning have committed errors of the coarsest kind.

Mr. White says: "In speaking or writing English, we have only to choose the right words and put them in the right places, respecting no laws but those of reason, conforming to no order but that which we call logical." But many people must be taught *what are* "the laws of reason, and the order which we call logical." Without some instruction in these matters, common people will hardly ever write half-a-dozen lines without a blunder. Take the mechanics and shopkeepers, for instance, and you will find that most of them are unable to announce even their names and business correctly. Not to mention the ludicrous and amusing errors of which Mr. White himself gives specimens—the "inauguration of a sample-room," the "home-made hotel," etc.—we have only to look at any common sign to be convinced of the truth of this statement. "John Smith, Iron Foundry," "John Jones, Cigar-Store." John Smith is not an iron foundry, nor John Jones a cigar-store. We know that they mean, "John Smith, Iron Founder," or "John Smith's Iron Foundry," "John Jones, Cigar-maker," or "John Jones's Cigar-Store"; but they must be TAUGHT to SAY what they mean, and the only way to do this is to instruct them in the principles of grammar; or, if you please, in "the laws of reason and the order which we call logical."

Boys and girls must be taught to *write* their thoughts as well as to *speak* them. It is vain to say otherwise. And the only question is, what is the best way of teaching them. Mr. White will not listen to the teaching of grammar in any shape or form whatever. Well, as far as the text-book method, the rule-and-word-cramming method

of the public schools, is concerned, he is perfectly right; there is very little profit to be derived from it. But there is a right and a wrong way of doing everything. Mr. White has never, I imagine, been a teacher; he knows nothing of the actual work of teaching young people how to write correctly; he knows nothing of *teaching*, I imagine, except by *writing*, which is an easy, pleasant, and convenient way of teaching—I say not a word against its effectiveness—for no questions are asked, except such as may be again answered in writing, at one's leisure, and without interruption or interpellation. If he were a teacher, he would find it impossible to teach boys and girls anything of correct speech without giving them some knowledge of the LAWS of speech—as impossible as it would be to teach them any science or art without mentioning the name or explaining the meaning of any one of its parts. I do not say that this knowledge must be communicated by means of a book; it may be communicated without a book; indeed, much better without a book. But taught it must be. For when you have shown boys and girls how to write a composition, and they have written it, how are you going to show them or explain to them its errors, or how to improve their language, without ever mentioning anything of the principles of grammar? Can there be any better way of showing a boy that “He writes beautiful” is wrong, than by explaining to him the difference between the adjective and the adverb? Can there be any better way of showing him that “The book lays on the table” is wrong, than by explaining to him the difference between a transitive and an intransitive verb? Can there be any better way of showing that “I am taller than him” is wrong, than by explaining to him the difference between the nominative and the objective case? That “The color of the leaves are green” is wrong, than by showing him the nature of subject and predicate, and that the one must agree with the other? These explana-

tions, properly done, will be like taking him out of a thick fog, and putting him in broad sunlight; taking him out of a perplexing, bewildering maze, and putting him on a plain high-road, with a chart or compass by which he may walk right on to his goal, with perfect ease, and in perfect confidence.

I have heard of a lawyer who, at a banquet of gentlemen of his cloth, brought out a toast "To the man who writes his own will." Why? Because he is likely to make use of language that will admit of question as to its meaning; and thus give work to the lawyers. Now I maintain that the man who acquires a clear comprehension of the principles of our language may write in such a manner as to defy the astutest lawyer to make his words mean anything else than what he intends them to mean; which is something that cannot be said of the man who learns only by talking and reading. Such a man lives in the land of uncertainty, and never knows whither he is going or whence he has come.

Grammar, properly considered and properly taught, is nothing but an unfolding of general principles, which must be applied, more or less, in all languages; every one of which principles has a reason for its existence, and the majority of which may be made as plain and evident as a statement in mathematics. Mr. White says that nobody that thinks of his grammar while writing will ever write a sentence worth reading. Of course, no boy or girl ought for a moment to think of his grammar while writing a composition; in fact, nobody ever does think of his *grammar* while intent on putting down his *thoughts*. But when the work is DONE, when he HAS written it, then he ought to be able to review it understandingly, and see that it conforms to "the laws of reason and the order which we call logical"; otherwise he will, in nine cases out of ten, write incorrectly.

I fully agree with Mr. White, that all the grammars of

Brown, Green, White, and Black, may be thrown into the fire, and the world will be none the worse off; for, in my opinion, boys and girls ought to be taught the principles of English grammar without placing any text-book whatever in their hands. Never did the Board of Education of New York adopt a wiser resolution than that recently adopted, abolishing grammar text-books from the public schools, in all but the two higher grades. Any person, that requires a book in the hands of his scholars in order to teach them the principles of English grammar, is no teacher; he is simply a crammer-down of other people's teaching, which he has himself been unable to master. A genuine teacher requires, in order to teach grammar, nothing but the blackboard and a piece of chalk; all the rest must come out of his head or out of the heads of his scholars. He may make use of what books he pleases in building up his own knowledge; but no book should ever be placed in the hands of his scholars. To children, books on the subject of grammar are generally in a dead language; it is all Greek to them; the living speech of the teacher is the only language they can understand. Away, therefore, with all grammar text-books; for they are the dead-weights of progress, fatal to all true teaching.

Nor is this book of Cobbett's intended for boys and girls at school; it is for those who are studying out of school; for those who are trying to acquire that real, practical, profitable knowledge which is acquired by *self-exertion*, or *self-help*; for those who have no teacher, and are striving to teach themselves; for those who wish *to learn* in order *to teach*; for those who have failed to make any proper progress by means of other grammars, and now wish to UNDERSTAND and MASTER the subject for themselves.

I do not deny that this book, being so entirely different from all other grammars; so conversational, easy, and plain in its character; I do not deny that it *may* be ad-

vantageously used by school-boys under a competent teacher; nay, even under an incompetent teacher;—in fact, if the teacher *must* use a text-book, he cannot select a better one than Cobbett's;—but what I maintain is, that it is the only grammar that can be profitably used without a teacher; the only book that can teach grammar BY ITSELF to those who are learning FOR THEMSELVES. As long as principles last, and as long as men learn by using their reason, grammar in some shape *must* be taught; and this being granted, I contend that there is no BETTER WAY of teaching it than this way of Cobbett's. Of course, no child ought ever to be taught a word about grammar until he has learned to read fluently, and even write tolerably well, the words of his native language; not until he has attained his twelfth or fourteenth year; for grammar is a matter which cannot be rightly understood and assimilated before that age. This is another reason why the action of the New York Board of Education is a wise one.

Some of Mr. White's readers—feeling, no doubt, as I did, that even if all ordinary grammars *are* worthless, *some* grammar of *some* sort is necessary, and being delighted by his clear and sensible manner of writing—requested *him* to write a grammar; one of them declaring that if he did so, a future generation would rise up and call him blessed. Whereupon Mr. White makes the following amusing and significant reply: "I would gladly act on this suggestion if it were probable that any responsible and competent publisher would make it prudent for me to do so. It would be delightful to believe that the next generation would rise up and call me blessed; but I am of necessity much more interested in the question whether the present generation would rise up and put its hand into its pocket to pay me for my labor. Any one who is acquainted with the manner in which school-books are 'introduced' in this country, knows that the

opinions of competent persons upon the merits of a book have the least possible influence upon its coming sufficiently into vogue to make its publication profitable; and publishers, like other men of business, work for money. One of the trade made, I know—although not to me—an answer like this to a proposition to publish a short series of school-books: ‘I believe your books are excellent; but supposing that they are all that you believe them to be, I should, after stereotyping them, be obliged to spend \$100,000 in introducing them. I am not prepared to do this, and therefore I must say No, at once. The merit of a book has nothing to do with its value in trade.’ And the speaker was a man of experience.”\*

Now, I am strongly inclined to think that these admirers of Mr. White’s, and all those disgusted with the ordinary grammars and the ordinary methods of teaching grammar, will, if made acquainted with Cobbett’s little grammar, which has long been out of print in this country, find what they want, or nearly what they want; for there does not exist in our language a clearer exposition of the nature of English grammar than this by Cobbett. The very language of the grammar itself is a capital illustration of how one ought to write; and if the scholar’s *understanding* the subject is a true test of the proper *learning* of it, then no other grammar can, in the attainment of this end, be compared with this; for thousands, who have failed to understand the subject by other grammars, have succeeded by this, and have, no doubt, risen up and called Cobbett blessed for writing it. Even Mr. White himself, who looks upon most other grammars as worse than useless, declares of Cobbett’s grammar, that he has “read it with great admiration, both for the soundness of its teaching and the excellence of its sys-

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\* “Words and their Uses,” p. 427.

tem.”\* And he also declares, I think (I quote from memory), that if grammar is to be taught at all, it cannot be taught better than by this method of Cobbett's.

At a meeting of school superintendents held recently in Iowa, one of the superintendents read a paper on text-books, in which he says: “Men of letters and men of science have sought to veil their thoughts with the obscurity of strange and foreign terms rather than to make the road following them in their investigation easy. They have sought the vain-glory of stultification in their selection of a medium for the communication of their thoughts, rather than the lasting praise consequent upon a simple style. Hence the difficulty in following them in their text-books, and the unprofitableness of being taught how to read thought from printed characters.” If there is one writer in the whole range of English literature who deserves more praise than another for avoiding this very style, so common among ordinary writers; if there is one author who is more conspicuous than any other for clothing his thoughts in plain, intelligible language, it is William Cobbett. In all that goes to the making up of good English speech, he has no superior. He was the first to show how one ought to write for young people, the first to write in a manner that plain people could understand; the first to instruct in a truly edifying manner. It is his great glory that he uses simple, plain language, and he makes every subject he touches, whether it be the definition of a verb or the explanation of the nature of the national debt, perfectly clear and intelligible.

The Editor has endeavored to write the notes in something of the same plain and easy style as that in which Cobbett has written the grammar, keeping constantly in mind that he is addressing a youth of fourteen or fifteen years of age. Of course, he has never for a moment thought of imitating Cobbett; but simply and only of making the matter plain.

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\* “Every-day English,” Letters to the New York *Times*.

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# DEDICATION.

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TO HER MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY,

QUEEN CAROLINE.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR MAJESTY,

A work, having for its objects, to lay the solid foundation of literary knowledge amongst the laboring classes of the community; to give practical effect to the natural genius found in the soldier, the sailor, the apprentice, and the plough-boy; and to make that genius a perennial source of wealth, strength, and safety to the kingdom; such a work naturally seeks the approbation of your majesty, who, amongst all the royal personages of the present age, is the only one that appears to have justly estimated the value of the people.

The nobles and the hierarchy have long had the arrogance to style themselves the pillars that support the throne. But, as your majesty has now clearly ascertained, royalty has, in the hour of need, no efficient supporters but the people.

During your majesty's long, arduous, magnanimous, and gallant struggle against matchless fraud and bound-

less power, it must have inspired you with great confidence to perceive the wonderful intelligence and talent of your millions of friends; while your majesty cannot have failed to observe, that the haughty and insolent few who have been your enemies, have, upon all occasions, exhibited an absence of knowledge, a poverty of genius, a feebleness of intellect, which nothing but a constant association with malevolence and perfidy could prevent from being ascribed to dotage or idiocy.

That to her, whose great example is so well calculated to inspire us with a love of useful knowledge, and to stimulate us to perseverance in its pursuit; that to her, the records of whose magnanimity and courage will make mean spite and cowardice hide their heads to the end of time; that to her, who, while in foreign lands, did honor to Britain's throne, and to Britain herself, by opening the debtor's prison, and by setting the captive Christian free; that to her, who has so long had to endure all the sufferings that malice could invent and tyranny execute; that to her, God may grant, to know no more of sorrow, but long to live in health, prosperity, and glory, surrounded and supported by a grateful and admiring people, is the humble prayer of

Your majesty's most dutiful

And most devoted servant,

WILLIAM COBBETT.

LONDON, Nov. 25th, 1820.

TO  
MR. JAMES PAUL COBBETT.

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LETTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

*North Hempstead, Long Island, Dec. 6, 1817.*

MY DEAR LITTLE JAMES:

You have now arrived at the age of fourteen years without ever having been bidden, or even advised, to look into a book; and all you know of reading or of writing you owe to your own unbiassed taste and choice. But, while you have lived unpersecuted by such importunities, you have had the very great advantage of being bred up under a roof beneath which no cards, no dice, no gaming, no senseless pastime of any description, ever found a place. In the absence of these, books naturally became your companions during some part of your time: you have read and have written, because you saw your elders read and write, just as you have learned to ride and hunt and shoot, to dig the beds in the garden, to trim the flowers and to prune the trees. The healthful exercise, and the pleasures, unmixed with fear, which you have derived from these sources, have given you "a sound mind in a sound body," and this, says an English writer, whose works you will by-and-by read, "is the greatest blessing that God can give to man."

It is true that this is a very great blessing; but mere

soundness of mind, without any mental acquirements, is possessed by millions; it is an ordinary possession; and it gives a man no fair pretensions to merit, because he owes it to accident, and not to any thing done by himself. But knowledge, in any art or science, being always the fruit of observation, study, or practice, gives, in proportion to its extent and usefulness, the possessor a just claim to respect. We do, indeed, often see all the outward marks of respect bestowed upon persons merely because they are rich or powerful; but these, while they are bestowed with pain, are received without pleasure. They drop from the tongue or beam from the features, but have no communication with the heart. They are not the voluntary offerings of admiration, or of gratitude; but are extorted from the hopes, the fears, the anxieties, of poverty, of meanness, or of guilt. Nor is respect due to honesty, fidelity, or any such qualities; because dishonesty and perfidy are crimes. To entitle a man to respect, there must be something of his own doing, beyond the bounds of his well-known duties and obligations.

Therefore, being extremely desirous to see you, my dear James, an object of respect, I now call upon you to apply your mind to the acquiring of that kind of knowledge which is inseparable from an acquaintance with books; for, though knowledge in every art and science is, if properly applied, worthy of praise in proportion to its extent and usefulness, there are some kinds of knowledge which are justly considered as of a superior order, not only because the possession of them is a proof of more than ordinary industry and talent, but because the application of them has naturally a more powerful influence in the affairs and on the condition of our friends, acquaintances, neighbors, and country. Blake, the Titchfield thatcher, who broke his leg into splinters in falling from a wheat-rick, was, on account of the knowledge which he possessed, beyond that of laborers in general, an object

of respect; but, in its degree, and in the feelings from which it arose, how different was that respect from the respect due to our excellent neighbor, Mr. Blundell, who restored the leg to perfect use, after six garrison and army surgeons had declared that it was impossible to preserve it, and that, if the leg were not cut off, the man must die within twenty-four hours! It is probable that the time of Mr. Blundell was not, on this occasion, occupied more, altogether, than four days and four nights; yet, the effect was a great benefit to be enjoyed by Blake for probably thirty or forty years to come: and, while we must see that this benefit would necessarily extend itself to the whole of his numerous family, we must not overlook those feelings of pleasure which the cure would naturally produce amongst friends, acquaintances, and neighbors.

The respect due to the profession of the surgeon or physician is, however, of an order inferior to that which is due to the profession of the law; for whether in the character of counsellor or of judge, here are required, not only uncommon industry, labor, and talent, in the acquirement of knowledge; but the application of this knowledge in defending the property of the feeble or incautious against the attacks of the strong and the wiles of the crafty, in affording protection to innocence and securing punishment to guilt, has, in the affairs of men and on their condition in life, a much more extensive and powerful influence than can possibly arise from the application of surgical or medical knowledge.

To the functions of statesmen and legislators is due the highest respect which can be shown by man to anything human; for, not only are the industry, labor, and talent requisite in the acquirement of knowledge, still greater and far greater here, than in the profession of the law; but, of the application of this knowledge, the effects are so transcendent in point of magnitude as to place them

beyond all the bounds of comparison. Here it is not individual persons with their families, friends, and neighbors that are affected; but whole countries and communities. Here the matters to be discussed and decided on are peace or war, and the liberty or slavery, happiness or misery, of nations. Here a single instance of neglect, a single oversight, a single error, may load with calamity millions of men, and entail that calamity on a long series of future generations.

This is true enough; but it is a remarkable fact that nearly all the efforts of legislators, political as well as ecclesiastical, have been of such a nature as to cause anything but respect for them. The historian Buckle shows that the great bulk of the enactments of legislators, since the beginning of history, have been conducive of results directly opposite to those for which they were intended; that is, evil results; and that the only beneficial legislation of modern times has consisted in the undoing of what previous legislators have done. So that, of all the personages in history, none, unhappily, are deserving of more profound contempt, or, at least, of less esteem, than precisely those very men who ought to have secured the greatest esteem, legislators. And all this, not because they were bad men, but because they were lacking in knowledge.

And if this is the case with law-makers of honest intentions, what shall we say of those execrable wretches, those deadly cancers on the body politic, who, on becoming members of a legislature, sell themselves, body and soul, to wealthy corporations? What shall we think of *their* influence on the progress and welfare of the people, whose interests they were elected to protect and to promote? Such creatures lose not only the esteem of all honest men, but their own esteem, their self-esteem; they become contemptible, not only in their own eyes, but in the eyes of those who buy them; and as to the future, the hottest, deepest gulfs in hell are yawning for them!

As a contrast to Buckle's judgment of the great crowd of ignorant and consequently pernicious legislators, consider this remarkable statement which the same writer makes of the power and influence of one man of real knowledge: "Well may it be said of Adam Smith (author of 'The Wealth of Nations'), and said too without fear of contradiction, that this solitary Scotchman has, by the publication of one single work, contributed more towards the

happiness of man, than has been effected by the united abilities of all the statesmen and legislators of whom history has preserved an authentic account."—Hist. of Civilization, Vol I., p. 155.

But, my dear James, you will always bear in mind that as the degree and quality of our respect rise in proportion to the influence which the different branches of knowledge naturally have in the affairs and on the condition of men, so, in the cases of an imperfection in knowledge, or of neglect in its application, or of its perversion to bad purposes, all the feelings which are opposite to that of respect rise in the same proportion. To ignorant pretenders to surgery and medicine we award our contempt and scorn; on time-serving or treacherous counsellors, and on cruel or partial judges, we inflict our detestation and abhorrence; while, on rapacious, corrupt, perfidious, or tyrannical statesmen and legislators, the voice of human nature cries aloud for execration and vengeance.

The particular path of knowledge to be pursued by you will be of your own choosing; but, as to knowledge connected with books, there is a step to be taken before you can fairly enter upon any path. In the immense field of this kind of knowledge, innumerable are the paths, and GRAMMAR is the gate of entrance to them all. And if grammar is so useful in the attaining of knowledge, it is absolutely necessary in order to enable the possessor to communicate, by writing, that knowledge to others, without which communication the possession must be comparatively useless to himself in many cases, and, in almost all cases, to the rest of mankind.

The actions of men proceed from their *thoughts*. In order to obtain the coöperation, the concurrence, or the consent, of others, we must communicate our thoughts to them. The means of this communication are *words*; and grammar teaches us *how to make use of words*. Therefore, in all the ranks, degrees, and situations of life, a knowledge of the principles and rules of grammar must



be useful; in some situations it must be necessary to the avoiding of really injurious errors; and in no situation, which calls on man to place his thoughts upon paper, can the possession of it fail to be a source of self-gratulation, or the want of it a cause of mortification and sorrow.

But, to the acquiring of this branch of knowledge, my dear son, there is one motive which, though it ought at all times, to be strongly felt, ought, at the present time, to be so felt in an extraordinary degree: I mean that desire which every man, and especially every young man, should entertain to be able to assert with effect the rights and liberties of his country. When you come to read the history of those laws of England by which the freedom of the people has been secured, and by which the happiness and power and glory of our famed and beloved country have been so greatly promoted; when you come to read the history of the struggles of our forefathers, by which those sacred laws have, from time to time, been defended against despotic ambition; by which they have been restored to vigor when on the eve of perishing; by which their violators have never failed, in the end, to be made to feel the just vengeance of the people; when you come to read the history of these struggles in the cause of freedom, you will find that tyranny has no enemy so formidable as the pen. And, while you will see with exultation the long-imprisoned, the heavily-fined, the banished William Prynne, returning to liberty, borne by the people from Southampton to London, over a road strewn with flowers; then accusing, bringing to trial, and to the block, the tyrants from whose hands he and his country had unjustly and cruelly suffered; while your heart and the heart of every young man in the kingdom will bound with joy at the spectacle, you ought all to bear in mind that, without a knowledge of *grammar*, Mr. Prynne could never have performed any of those acts by which his name has

been thus preserved, and which have caused his memory to be held in honor.

Though I have now said what, I am sure, will be more than sufficient to make you entertain a strong desire to take this first step in the road to literary knowledge, I cannot conclude this introductory letter without observing, that you ought to proceed in your study, not only with diligence, but with *patience*; that, if you meet with difficulties, you should bear in mind that, to enjoy the noble prospect from Port's-Down Hill, you had first to climb slowly to the top; and that, if those difficulties gather about you and impede your way, you have only to call to your recollection any one of the many days that you have toiled through briers and brambles and bogs, cheered and urged on by the hope of at last finding and killing your game.

I have put my work into the form of Letters, in order that I might be continually reminded that I was addressing myself to persons who needed to be spoken to with great clearness. I have *numbered* the Letters themselves, and also the *paragraphs*, in order that I might be able, in some parts of the work, to *refer* you to, or *tell you where to look at*, other parts of the work. And here I will just add, that a *sentence*, used as a term in Grammar, means one of those portions of words which are divided from the rest by a *single dot*, which is called a *period*, or full point; and that a *paragraph* means one of those collections, or blocks, of *sentences* which are divided from the rest of the work by beginning *a new line* a little *further in* than the lines in general; and, of course, all this part, which I have just now written, beginning with "*I have put my work into the form,*" is a *paragraph*.

In a confident reliance on your attentiveness, industry, and patience, I have a hope not less confident of seeing you a man of real learning, employing your time and talents in aiding the cause of truth and justice, in afford-

ing protection to defenceless innocence, and in drawing down vengeance on lawless oppression; and, in that hope, I am your happy, as well as affectionate, father,

WILLIAM COBBETT.

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## LETTER II.

### DEFINITION OF GRAMMAR, AND OF ITS DIFFERENT BRANCHES, OR PARTS.

MY DEAR JAMES:

1. In the foregoing Letter I have laid before you some of the inducements to the study of Grammar. In this I will define, or describe, the thing called *Grammar*; and also its different *Branches*, or *Parts*.

2. Grammar, as I observed to you before, teaches us *how to make use of words*; that is to say, it teaches us how to make use of them in a proper manner, as I used to teach you how to sow and plant the beds in the garden; for you could have thrown about seeds and stuck in plants of some sort or other, in some way or other, without any teaching of mine; and so can anybody, without rules or instructions, put masses of words upon paper; but to be able to choose the words which ought to be employed, and to place them where they ought to be placed, we must become acquainted with certain principles and rules; and these principles and rules constitute what is called Grammar.

3. Nor must you suppose, by-and-by, when you come to read about *Nouns* and *Verbs* and *Pronouns*, that all this tends to nothing but mere ornamental learning; that it is not altogether necessary, and that people may write to be understood very well without it. This is not the case; for, without a good deal of knowledge relative to these same Nouns and Verbs, those who write are never

sure that they put upon paper what they mean to put upon paper. I shall, before the close of these Letters, show you that even very learned men have frequently written, and caused to be published, not only what they did not mean, but the very contrary of what they meant; and if errors, such as are here spoken of, are sometimes committed by learned men, into what endless errors must those fall who have no knowledge of any principles or rules, by the observance of which the like may be avoided! Grammar, perfectly understood, enables us not only to express our meaning fully and clearly, but so to express it as to enable us to defy the ingenuity of man to give to our words any other meaning than that which we ourselves intend them to express. This, therefore, is a science of substantial utility.

4. As to the different *Branches* or *Parts* of Grammar, they are *four*; and they are thus named: *Orthography*, *Prosody*, *Etymology*, and *Syntax*.

5. There are two of these branches on which we have very little to say, and the names of which have been *kept* in use from an unwillingness to give up the practice of former times; but, as it is usual to give them a place in books of this kind, I will explain to you the nature of all the four branches.

6. ORTHOGRAPHY is a word made up of two Greek words, which mean *spelling*. The use of foreign words, in this manner, was introduced at the time when the English language was in a very barbarous state; and, though this use has been continued, it ought to be a rule with you, always, when you either write or speak, to avoid the use of any foreign or uncommon word, if you can express your meaning as fully and clearly by an English word in common use. However, *Orthography* means neither more nor less than the very humble business of putting *letters* together properly, so that they shall form *words*. This is so very childish a concern that I will not appear to

suppose it necessary for me to dwell upon it; but as you will, by-and-by, meet with some directions, under the head of Etymology, in which *Vowels* and *Consonants* will be spoken of, I will here, for form's sake, just observe that the letters, A, E, I, O, and U, are *Vowels*. Y, in certain cases, is also a *Vowel*. All the rest of the letters of the alphabet are *Consonants*.

This "very humble business" of spelling, however, must not be passed over so lightly; for it is a subject of very great difficulty to many persons. It is notorious that many of our ablest English authors were never able to spell or punctuate correctly, and that the correctness of their printed books, in this respect, is entirely owing to the skill of the compositor. Some of their manuscripts might, indeed, be very aptly compared to the communication of Tom Hood's witty but illiterate correspondent, who, on writing him a long letter without any points whatever, jotted them all down in a row at the end of his letter, and told him to "pepper and salt" as he pleased. It is the compositor that does the "peppering and salting," and much more, for many a writer of large pretensions.

The orthography of our English words, from their various derivation and the variety of sounds given to the letters of the alphabet, is perhaps more difficult than that of the words of any other modern tongue; and I wish to indicate here the very best and simplest way of learning it, together with the punctuation of the sentences—I mean by DICTATIONS. It is not necessary to have a teacher for this purpose; anybody who can read correctly can dictate to you. All you have to do is to write down the words and points that are slowly read to you from a book, and when you have written about a page, take the printed book and compare your words and points with those in the book, and correct accordingly. This is *the* cure for all spelling-reform nonsense. Write page after page to dictation, and you will soon find it all come very natural—you will wonder how anybody could ever think of spelling the words otherwise than the way they *are* spelled, or how they *could* be spelled otherwise.

The old method—still practiced in our public schools—of giving out columns of single and separate words to be spelled, verbally and in writing, many of them such as may never be seen twice again in a lifetime, is of very little value; for it is disjointed, dry, and pointless; whereas, by dictating sentences from a book, the

scholar learns: 1st, to spell the words in common use; 2d, to spell words according to their meaning (there, their; hair, hare; pear, pair); 3d, to associate words with ideas, thus instinctively and imperceptibly learning their proper meaning and right use; and, 4th, he acquires a *feeling* or *taste* for correct language; words and sentences are impressed forcibly on his mind by hearing, seeing, and writing them. Besides, he learns in this way, better than in any other, a knowledge of punctuation, which in English is different with different writers; in fact, every English writer has his own style of punctuating, for this is generally a matter of taste and feeling. In writing to dictation, the work done by the scholar is nearly the same as that done by the compositor, who is the best speller and punctuator in the world. Therefore, get somebody to dictate to you every day a page, or half a page, from a book, and you will, in a few months, acquire a better knowledge of orthography and punctuation than if you had spelled your way through a dozen spelling-books.

7. PROSODY is a word taken from the Greek language, and it means not so much as is expressed by the more common word PRONUNCIATION; that is to say, the business of using the proper *sound*, and employing the *due length of time*, in the uttering of syllables and words. This is a matter, however, which ought not to occupy much of your attention, because *pronunciation* is learned as birds learn to chirp and sing. In some counties of England many words are pronounced in a manner different from that in which they are pronounced in other counties; and between the pronunciation of Scotland and that of Hampshire the difference is very great indeed. But, while all inquiries into the causes of these differences are useless, and all attempts to remove them are vain, the differences are of very little real consequence. For instance, though the Scotch say *coorn*, the Londoners *caw*, and the Hampshire folks *carn*, we know they all *mean* to say *corn*. Children will pronounce as their fathers and mothers pronounce; and if, in common conversation, or in speeches, the matter be good and judiciously arranged, the facts clearly stated, the arguments conclusive, the

words well chosen and properly placed, hearers whose approbation is worth having will pay very little attention to the accent. In short, it is sense, and not sound, which is the object of your pursuit; and, therefore, I have said enough about *Prosody*.

Here is a circumstance that suggests a by no means unfavorable commentary on the difference between the pronunciation of English in this country and in England: Mr. James Paul Cobbett, son of William Cobbett, has added to a late edition of this grammar, a sixteen-page chapter on pronunciation, pointing out the various *classes of words* commonly mispronounced by *classes* and *counties of people* in England. After carefully noting them all, I have come to the conclusion that the whole batch is utterly useless for our people, as I do not know of a single *class* of people in this country who make *any one* of the same mispronunciations. Many of the mistakes are, it is true, made here, too; as, bood for bud; doon for done; aboove for above; fayther for father; awch for arch; glawss for glass; but they are not made by *classes* of people; they are, in fact, made by none but a few illiterate and pretentious people.

The most common mistake made by people in this country consists in misplacing the *accent* of words; as, in-dus'-try for in'-dus-try; in-ter-est'-ing for in'-ter-est-ing. All these may be corrected by reference to the dictionary, in which the pronunciation of every word is properly marked. The stress of the voice always falls on that syllable having the accent-mark ('); thus, per'-emp-to-ry, not per-emp'to-ry. I have read somewhere that, on one occasion, when Mr. Sumner's colleague in the Senate said he hoped that the honorable gentlemen would make an *in'quiry* into some matter, Mr. Sumner whispered to him: "inqui'ry."

By-the-bye, there is one other mistake in pronunciation, which is very common among Americans, in the Eastern States at least, and that is pronouncing such words as *new*, *dew*, *stew*, as if they were written *noo*, *doo*, *stoo*. They must be pronounced like *few* and *view*. The same error is made in such words as *duty*, *gratitude*, where the *u* must be long, as in *useful*.

There is something else that usually comes under this heading. The Greek word *prosodia* means, literally, "belonging to song or hymn," and is usually employed to signify that part of grammar which treats of the rules of rhythm in metrical compositions. Cobbett, it is well known, had very little admiration for

poetry, and no doubt considered it a waste of time to say anything about its laws; but, though perhaps not one in a hundred of those who study this book will ever attempt to write poetry, every intelligent person ought to *know* something of its laws; and I shall, therefore, at the end of the book, after more necessary matters have been mastered, attempt to show what a simple matter this is, as far as English is concerned.

8. ETYMOLOGY is a very different matter; and, under this head, you will enter on your study. This is a word which has been formed out of two Greek words; and it means the *pedigree* or *relationship of words*, or, the manner in which one word grows out of, or comes from, another word. For instance, the word *walk* expresses an action, or movement, of our legs; but, in some cases we say *walks*, in others *walked*, in others *walking*. These three latter words are all different from each other, and they all differ from the original word, *walk*; but the action or movement, expressed by each of the four, is precisely the same sort of action or movement, and the three latter words grow out of, or come from, the first. The words here mentioned differ from each other with regard to the letters of which they are composed. The difference is made in order to express differences as to the *Persons* who walk, as to the *Number* of persons, as to the *Time* of walking. You will come, by-and-by, to the principles and rules according to which the varying of the spelling of words is made to correspond with these and other differences; and these principles and rules constitute what is called *Etymology*.

9. SYNTAX is a word which comes from the Greek. It means, in that language, *the joining of several things together*; and, as used by grammarians, it means those principles and rules which teach us how to put words together so as to form *sentences*. It means, in short, *sentence-making*. Having been taught by the rules of *Etymology* what are the relationships of words, how words grow out of each other, how they are varied in their



letters in order to correspond with the variation in the circumstances to which they apply, *Syntax* will teach you how to give all your words their *proper* situations or places, when you come to put them together into sentences. And here you will have to do with *points* as well as with words. The *points* are four in number, the *Comma*, the *Semi-Colon*, the *Colon*, and the *Period*. Besides these points, there are certain *marks*, such as the *mark of interrogation*, for instance; and to use these points and marks properly is, as you will by-and-by find, a matter of very great importance.

10. I have now given you a description of Grammar, and of its separate Branches or Parts. I have shown you that the first two of these Branches may be dismissed without any further notice; but very different indeed is the case with regard to the latter two. Each of these will require several Letters; and these Letters will contain matter which it will be impossible to understand without the greatest attention. You must read soberly and slowly, and you must think as you read. You must not hurry on from one Letter to another, as if you were reading a history; but you must have patience to get, if possible, at a clear comprehension of one part of the subject before you proceed to another part. When I was studying the French language, the manner in which I proceeded was this: when I had attentively read over, three times, a lesson, or other division of my Grammar, I wrote the lesson down upon a loose sheet of paper. Then I read it again several times in my own hand-writing. Then I copied it, in a very plain hand, and without a blot, into a book, which I had made for the purpose. But if, in writing my lesson down on a loose sheet of paper, I committed one single error, however trifling, I used to tear the paper, and write the whole down again; and, frequently, this occurred three or four times in the writing down of one lesson. I, at first, found this labor very irksome;

but, having imposed it on myself as a duty, I faithfully discharged that duty; and, long before I had proceeded half way through my Grammar, I experienced all the benefits of my industry and perseverance.

This was, no doubt, how Cobbett, in his soldier days, learned to spell and punctuate; for what he did was as good as writing so many dictations. If any scholar feels like following his example, he may lighten the labor and secure nearly equal benefit by writing the lessons down as dictations.



### LETTER III.

#### ETYMOLOGY.

#### *The different Parts of Speech, or Sorts of Words.*

MY DEAR JAMES:

11. In the second Letter I have given you a description of *Etymology*, and shown you that it treats of the *pedigree*, or *relationship*, of words, of the nature of which relationship I have given you a specimen in the word *walk*. The next thing is to teach you the *principles* and *rules*, according to which the spelling and employing of words are varied in order to express the various circumstances attending this relationship. But, before I enter on this part of my instructions, I must inform you that there are several *distinct sorts* of words, or, as they are usually called, *Parts of Speech*; and it will be necessary for you to be able, before you proceed further, to distinguish the words belonging to each of these Parts of Speech from those belonging to the other parts. There are *Nine* Parts of Speech, and they are named thus:

ARTICLES,

PRONOUNS,

VERBS,

PREPOSITIONS,

NOUNS,

ADJECTIVES,

ADVERBS,

CONJUNCTIONS,

INTERJECTIONS.

12. Before the sergeant begins to teach young soldiers their *exercise* of the musket, he explains to them the different parts of it; the butt, the stock, the barrel, the loops, the swivels, and so on; because, unless they know these by their names, they cannot know how to obey his instructions in the handling of the musket. Sailors, for the same reason, are told which is the tiller, which are the yards, which the shrouds, which the tacks, which the sheets, which the booms, and which are each and every part of the ship. Apprentices are taught the names of all the tools used in their trade; and ploughboys the names of the various implements of husbandry. This species of preliminary knowledge is absolutely necessary in all these callings of life; but not more necessary than it is for you to learn, before you go any further, how to *know the sorts of words one from another*. To teach you this, therefore, is the object of the present letter.

13. ARTICLES. There are but *three* in our language; and these are, *the*, *an*, and *a*. Indeed, there are but two, because *an* and *a* are the same word, the latter being only an abbreviation, or a shortening, of the former. I shall, by-and-by, give you rules for the using of these Articles; but my business in this place is only to teach you how to know one sort of words from another sort of words.

14. NOUNS. The word *Noun* means *name*, and nothing more; and *Nouns* are the *names of persons and things*. As far as persons and other animals and things that we can see go, it is very easy to distinguish *Nouns*; but there are many *Nouns* which express what we can neither see, nor hear, nor touch. For example: *Conscience*, *Vanity*, *Vice*, *Sobriety*, *Steadiness*, *Valour*; and a great number of others. Grammarians, anxious to give some easy rule by which the scholar might distinguish *Nouns* from other words, have directed him to put the words, *the good*, before any word, and have told him that,

if the three words make *sense*, the last word is a *Noun*. This is frequently the case; as, the good *house*, the good *dog*; but the good *sobriety* would not appear to be very *good sense*. In fact there is no rule of this kind that will answer the purpose. You must employ your *mind* in order to arrive at the knowledge here desired.

15. Every word which stands for a person or any animal, or for any thing of *substance*, dead or alive, is a *Noun*. So far the matter is very easy. Thus, *man*, *cat*, *tree*, *log*, are Nouns. But when we come to the words which are the names of things, and which things are not *substances*, the matter is not so easy, and it requires a little sober thought. This word *thought*, for example, is a *Noun*.

16. The only sure rule is this: that a word which stands for any thing that has an *existence* is a Noun. For example: *Pride*, *Folly*, *Thought*, *Misery*, *Truth*, *Falsehood*, *Opinion*, *Sentiment*. None of these have any *substance*. You cannot see them, or touch them; but they all have an *existence*. They all *exist* in the world; and, therefore, the words which represent them, or stand for them, are called Nouns. If you be still a little puzzled here, you must not be impatient. You will find the difficulty disappear in a short time, if you exert your powers of thinking. Ask yourself what *existence* means. You will find that the words, *very*, *for*, *think*, *but*, *pretty*, do not express any thing which has an *existence*, or a *being*; but that the words, *motive*, *zeal*, *pity*, *kindness*, do express things which have a *being*, or existence.

17. PRONOUNS. Words of this sort *stand in the place of Nouns*. Their name is from the Latin, and it means *For-nouns*, or *For-names*; that is to say, these words, called Pronouns, are used *for*, or *instead of*, Nouns. *He*, *She*, *Her*, *Him*, *Who*, for example, are Pronouns. The use of them is to prevent the repetition of Nouns, and to make speaking and writing more rapid and less

encumbered with words. An example will make this clear to you in a minute. Thus :

18. A woman went to a man, and told *him* that *he* was in great danger of being murdered by a gang of robbers, *who* had made preparations for attacking *him*. *He* thanked *her* for *her* kindness, and, as *he* was unable to defend *himself*, *he* left *his* house and went to a neighbor's.

19. Now, if there were no Pronouns, this sentence must be written as follows:—A woman went to a man, and told *the man*, that *the man* was in great danger of being murdered by a gang of robbers; as *a gang of robbers* had made preparations for attacking *the man*. *The man* thanked *the woman* for *the woman's* kindness; and as *the man* was unable to defend *the man's self*, *the man* left *the man's* house and went to a neighbor's.

20. There are several different classes of Pronouns; but of this, and of the manner of using Pronouns, you will be informed by-and-by. All that I aim at here is to enable you to form a clear idea with regard to the difference in the sorts of words, or Parts of Speech.

21. ADJECTIVES. The word *Adjective*, in its full, literal sense, means *something added to something else*. Therefore, this term is used in Grammar as the name of that Part of Speech which consists of words which are added, or put, to Nouns, in order to express something relating to the Nouns, which something could not be expressed without the help of *Adjectives*. For instance, there are several turkeys in the yard, some black, some white, some speckled; and, then, there are large ones and small ones of all the colours. I want you to go and catch a *turkey*; but I also want you to catch a *white* turkey, and not only a white turkey, but a *large* turkey. Therefore, I add, or *put to* the Noun, the words *white* and *large*, which, therefore, are called *Adjectives*.

22. Adjectives sometimes express the *qualities* of the Nouns, to which they are put; and this being very fre-

quently their use, some grammarians have thrown aside the word Adjectives, and have called words of this sort, *Qualities*. But this name is not sufficiently comprehensive; for there are many words which are Adjectives which have nothing to do with the *quality* of the Nouns to which they are put. *Good* and *bad* express qualities, but *long* and *short* merely express dimension, or duration, without giving any intimation as to the quality of the things expressed by the Nouns to which they are put; and yet *long* and *short* are Adjectives. You must read very attentively here, and consider soberly. You must keep in mind the above explanation of the *meaning* of the word Adjective; and if you also bear in mind that words of this sort always express some quality, some property, some appearance, or some distinctive circumstance, belonging to the Nouns to which they are put, you will very easily, and in a very short space of time, be able to distinguish an Adjective from words belonging to any other Part of Speech.

23. VERBS. Grammarians appear to have been at a loss to discover a suitable appellation for this important sort of words, or Part of Speech; for the word *Verb* means nothing more than *Word*. In the Latin it is *verbum*, in the French it is *verbe*; and the French, in their Bible, say *Le Verbe*, where we say *The Word*. The truth is that there are so many properties and circumstances, so many and such different powers and functions, belonging to this Part of Speech, that the mind of man is unable to bring the whole of them into any short and precise description. The first grammar that I ever looked into told me that “a *Verb* is a word which signifies to *do*, to *be*, or to *suffer*.” What was I to understand from this laconic account?

24. Verbs express all the different *actions* and *movements* of all creatures and of all things, whether alive or dead. As, for instance, to *speak*, to *bark*, to *grow*, to

*moulder*, to *crack*, to *crumble*, and the like. In all these cases there is *movement* clearly understood. But in the cases of, to *think*, to *reflect*, to *remember*, to *like*, to *detest*, and in an infinite number of cases, the *movement* is not so easily perceived. Yet these are all *Verbs*, and they do indeed express *movements* which we attribute to the *mind*, or the *heart*. But what shall we say in the cases of to *sit*, to *sleep*, to *rot*, and the like? Still these are all *Verbs*.

25. Verbs are, then, a sort of words, the use of which is to express the *actions*, the *movements*, and *the state or manner of being*, of all creatures and things, whether animate or inanimate. In speaking with reference to a man, to *fight* is an action; to *reflect* is a movement; to *sit* is a state of being.

26. Of the manner of using Verbs you will hear a great deal by-and-by; but what I have here said will, if you read attentively, and take time to consider, be sufficient to enable you to distinguish Verbs from the words which belong to the other Parts of Speech.

27. ADVERBS are so called because the words which belong to this Part of Speech are *added to verbs*. But this is an inadequate description; for, as you will presently see, they are sometimes otherwise employed. You have seen that Verbs express *actions*, *movements*, and *states of being*; and it is very frequently the use of Adverbs to express *the manner* of actions, movements, and states of being. Thus: the man fights *bravely*; he reflects *profoundly*; he sits *quietly*. In these instances the Adverbs perform an office, and are placed in a situation, which fully justify the name that has been given to this sort of words. But there are many Adverbs which do not express the manner of actions, movements, or states of being, and which are not added to verbs. For instance: "When you sow small seeds, make the earth *very* fine, and if it have, *of late*, been dry weather, take care to press the earth *extremely* hard upon the seeds." Here

are four Adverbs, but only the last of the four expresses any thing connected with a verb. This shows that the name of this class of words does not fully convey to our minds a description of their use.

28. However, with this name you must be content; but you must bear in mind that there are Adverbs of *time*, of *place*, and of *degree*, as well as of manner; and that their business is to express, or describe, some circumstances in addition to all that is expressed by the Nouns, Adjectives, and Verbs. In the above sentence, for example, the words *when*, *very*, *of late*, and *extremely*, add greatly to the precept, which, without them, would lose much of its force.

29. PREPOSITIONS. The Prepositions are, *in*, *to*, *for*, *from*, *of*, *by*, *with*, *into*, *against*, *at*, and several others. They are called *Prepositions* from two Latin words, meaning *before* and *place*; and this name is given them because they are in most cases *placed before* Nouns and Pronouns; as, "Indian corn is sown *in* May. *In* June, and the three following months, it is carefully cultivated. When ripe, *in* October, it is gathered *in* the field, *by* men who go *from* hill *to* hill *with* baskets, *into* which they put the ears. The leaves and stalks are then collected *for* winter use; and they not only serve as food *for* cattle and sheep, but are excellent *in* the making *of* sheds *to* protect animals against the inclemency *of* the weather."

30. Prepositions are not very numerous, and, though you will be taught to be very careful in using them, the above sentence will be quite sufficient to enable you to know the words belonging to this Part of Speech from the words belonging to any other Part of Speech.

Notice that the word is from "*prae*," *before*, and "*positio*," *a placing*. Now take any article of furniture near you—the desk, for instance—and think of all the *relations of position* with regard to it and something else. The book is *in* the desk, *on* the desk, *over* the desk, *above*, *under*, *beneath* or *below* the desk, *near*



the desk, *against* the desk, *beside* the desk, *within* or *without* the desk, and so on. Still, other relations are sometimes expressed by prepositions as well as that of position; as, *by* the desk, *of* the desk, *to* the desk, *for* the desk; but the majority of them show some *relation of position* between things and actions, or between persons and actions, or between things and states. This word *between*, for instance, is a preposition. Like other words used in grammar, its name, *preposition*, does not *express completely* the true nature of it.

31. CONJUNCTIONS are so called because they *conjoin*, or *join together*, words, or parts of sentences; as, "Peas *and* beans may be severed from the ground before they be quite dry; *but* they must not be put into sacks or barns until perfectly dry, *for*, if they be, they will mould." The word *and* joins together the words peas and beans, and, by the means of this *junction*, makes all the remaining part of the sentence apply to both. The word *but* connects the first with the second member of the sentence. The word *for*, which is sometimes a Conjunction, performs, in this case, the same office as the word *but*: it continues the connection; and thus does every part of the sentence apply to each of the two nouns which are the subject of it.

What a deal of useless learning we find in the ordinary grammars about this simple matter of conjunctions! They speak of conjunctions which are mere connectives, of co-ordinate and subordinate connectives, of copulative, adversative, and alternative conjunctions; then of subordinate connectives which join heterogeneous elements, and these subordinate connectives again divided into those which unite substantive clauses, those which unite adjective clauses, and those which unite adverbial clauses! What are children to make of all these hard words? Or, supposing they are made to understand the words, will it enable them to use the word *and*, for instance, more correctly by informing them that it is a *copulative* conjunction?

32. INTERJECTIONS. This name comes from two Latin words: *inter*, which means *between*, and *jectio*, which means *something thrown*. So that the full, literal mean-

ing of the word is *something thrown between*. The Interjections are *Ah! Oh! Alas!* and such like, which, indeed, are not *words*, because they have no definite meaning. They are mere *sounds*, and they have been mentioned by me merely because other grammarians have considered them as being a Part of Speech. But this one notice of them will be quite sufficient.

Here Cobbett's defective knowledge of Latin crops out, for *jectio* (*jacio*) does not mean *something thrown*, but merely *to throw*. But he is quite right in setting down interjections as forming no part of grammar. A writer in Chambers's Encyclopedia hits the mark still more effectively when he says that "they are, in fact, more akin to the sounds emitted by the lower animals than to articulate speech." Yet most grammarians take the trouble to set them down in classes, those that express surprise, those that express fear, and so on; as if the veriest boor that ever hopped over a clod would not know how to utter an exclamation expressing fear or surprise when he felt it! It is something very much like the Irishman's "teaching ducks to swim."

33. Thus, then, you are now able to distinguish, in many cases at least, to what Part of Speech belongs each of the several words which may come under your observation. I shall now proceed to the Etymology of each of these Parts of Speech. As we have done with the *Interjections*, there will remain only *eight* Parts to treat of, and this I shall do in eight Letters, allotting one Letter to each Part of Speech.

Here it seems proper to say to the thoughtful scholar that a word may (as remarked by Mr. White) belong to almost ANY part of speech, according to its use. We say *dog* is a noun; and so it is when it means an animal of the dog species; but it may be a verb or an adjective; as, he will *dog* me to my home; here is a *dog* cart. In this very phrase, "dog species," it is an adjective. Take, again, the word *but*. I will give it to you of four different parts of speech in four different senses. "I will go, *but* I will return. He is *but* five years old. The goat will *but* his head against you. He always has a *but* in his sayings." And the word could no doubt be used in still other parts of speech. If you cannot make these out now, wait a little; you will be able to do so by-and-by.

Spelled with two t's, there are three different *butts*, with three different meanings; the butt of ridicule, the butt of a segar, the butt of wine. Then, again, a word may be of two different parts of speech with a different accent, as, I *re-cord'* the deed; this is the *rec'-ord*. You see, therefore, every thing depends on the *sense* or the *use* made of a word; and you see, too, the utter uselessness of learning by heart instead of by reason. In learning any art or science, an ounce of understanding is worth a ton of memory.

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## LETTER IV.

### ETYMOLOGY OF ARTICLES.

MY DEAR JAMES:

34. In Letter III., paragraph 13, you have seen what sort of words ARTICLES are; that is to say, you have there learned how to distinguish the words belonging to this Part of Speech from words belonging to other Parts of Speech. You must now turn to Letter II., paragraph 8. Having read what you find there under the head of *Etymology*, you will see at once, that my business, in this present Letter, is to teach you those principles and rules according to which Articles are varied in order to make them suit the different circumstances which they are used to express.

35. You have seen that there are but *three* Articles, namely, A or AN, and THE. The two former are, in fact, the *same word*, but of this I shall say more presently. They are called *indefinite* Articles, because they do not *define*, or *determine*, what particular object is spoken of. The Nouns, to which they are prefixed, only serve to point out the *sort* of person or thing spoken of, without defining *what* person or *what* thing; as, *a tree is blowed down*. From this we learn that *some* tree is blowed down, but not *what* tree. But the definite Article THE determines the particular object of which we speak; as, the tree *which*

*stood close beside the barn* is blowed down. In this last instance, we are not only informed that a tree is blowed down, but the sentence also informs us what particular tree it is. This Article is used before nouns in the plural as well as before nouns in the singular number. It is sometimes used before words expressive of degrees of comparison; as, *the best, the worst, the highest, the lowest*. When we use a noun in the singular number to express a whole species, or sort, we use the definite Article; thus, we say, *the oak* is a fine tree, when we mean that oaks are fine trees.

36. The Article A becomes AN when this Article comes immediately before *any* word which begins with a *vowel*. This is for the sake of the *sound*, as *an adder, an elephant, an inch, an oily seed, an ugly hat*. The word *an* is also used before words which begin with an *h* which is *mute*; that is to say, which, though used in writing, is *not sounded* in speaking; as, *an hour*. This little variation in the article is, as I said before, for the sake of the *sound*; for it would be very disagreeable to say, *a adder, a elephant, a inch, a oily seed, a ugly hat, a hour*, and the like. But *a* is used in the usual way before words which begin with an *h* which is sounded in speaking; as, *a horse, a hair*, and the like. The indefinite Article can be used before nouns in the *singular number only*. There is a seeming exception to this rule in cases where the words *few* and *many* come before the noun; as, *a few horses; a great many horses*; but, in reality, this is not an exception, because the words *few* and *many* mean *number*; thus, *a small number of horses, a great number of horses*; and the indefinite Article agrees with this word *number*, which is understood, and which is in the *singular*.

It is remarkable that a man of Cobbett's discernment did not see through a certain inconsistency in the strict or literal application of this rule, the more especially as he explicitly declares that the change is made for the sake of *the sound*. He, like a thousand

others to the present day, followed out the letter of the rule and violated its spirit. For a word may begin with a vowel and yet have a *consonant sound*; and in this case the article must *not* be changed. Does it not sound much better to say, “a useful book,” than “an useful book?” “such a one,” than “such an one?” And it will be seen that when we say *a useful book, a one, a union, a ewe, a European*, and the like, we really conform to the *spirit* of the rule; for in all these cases the words begin with the **SOUND** of a consonant; as, *a yuseful book, a wone, a yunion, a yewe, a yeuropean*.

And this also clearly illustrates something else that has been left mysteriously indefinite in many grammars: “The vowels are *a, e, i, o, u*, and sometimes *w* and *y*.” What a puzzle this used to be to me in my grammar-studying days! There was the rule, plain enough; but *when* *w* and *y* were consonants, I knew no more than the man in the moon! I suppose that these writers of grammars repeat this rule, one after another, without knowing anything about it themselves. Now the reason here given why the indefinite article must remain unchanged before words beginning with a vowel and having a *y* or *w* sound, explains the whole matter; namely, that *y* and *w* at the **BEGINNING** of a syllable are consonants, but in the **MIDDLE** or at the **END** of a syllable are vowels. In the word *sympathy*, for instance, both *y*’s are vowels, because they are equal to *i*’s; in the word *yesterday*, the first is a consonant, and the second a vowel. It is precisely the same with the *w*; in the words *new, few, pew*, the *w*’s are vowels, being equal to *u*’s; in the word *window*, the first is a consonant and the second a vowel.

But there is another rule concerning words beginning with *h*, a rule of which Cobbett and many other writers of his day seem to have been unaware—although I have no doubt they unconsciously obeyed it—which is also formed for the sake of the sound. In these four words, for instance, *history, historical, hero, heroic*, the *h* is uniformly sounded, or aspirated. Yet we say *an historical fact, an heroic poem, a history, a hero*. How does this come? It is because we must say *an* before words beginning with *h* aspirate, *when the accent of such words falls on the SECOND SYLLABLE*. That is the rule. Say, therefore, *an hotel, an hereditary prince*, and not, as many do, *a hotel, a hereditary prince*; for the former *sounds* better.

I may here add that the tendency now-a-days is to sound the *h* in some words in which it was formerly silent: a humble man, a hospital, a hostler. I suppose Dickens’s Uriah Heep has made most people disgusted with “an ’umble man.” And it is perhaps

worth remarking here that many Americans make a serious mistake when they believe that all Englishmen drop their aitches, and put them in where they ought not to do so. The latter is never done by anybody in England but illiterate Londoners, and the former seldom by Englishmen of any culture.

I notice that recent grammarians follow Noah Webster in setting down articles as adjectives. It is true that these words always modify nouns in some way; but I see no advantage in setting them down among a class of words which generally signify *the kind* or *quality* of things, thus rendering the adjective itself all the more difficult to define. Besides, the articles have characteristics entirely their own, which can be remembered the better by keeping them apart. We shall see this more clearly by-and-by.



## LETTER V.

### ETYMOLOGY OF NOUNS.

37. THIS, my dear James, is a Letter of great importance, and, therefore, it will require great attention from you. Before you proceed further, you will again look well at Letter II., paragraph 8, and Letter III., paragraphs 14, 15, and 16, and there read carefully everything under the head of *Nouns*.

38. Now, then, as Letter III. has taught you how to distinguish Nouns from the words which belong to the other Parts of Speech, the business here is to teach you the principles and rules according to which Nouns are to be varied in the letters of which they are composed, according to which they are to be used, and according to which they are to be considered in their bearings upon other words in the sentences in which they are used.

39. In a Noun there are to be considered the *branches*, the *numbers*, the *genders*, and the *cases*; and all these must be attended to very carefully.

40. THE BRANCHES. There are two; for Nouns are

some of them **PROPER** and some **COMMON**. A Noun is called *proper* when it is used to distinguish one particular individual from the rest of the individuals of the same species or kind; as *James, Botley, Hampshire*. The Noun is called *common* when it applies to all the individuals of a kind; as, *man, village, county*. *Botley* is a proper Noun, because all villages have not this name; but *village* is a common noun, because all villages are called by that name: the name is *common* to them all. Several persons have the name of *James*, to be sure, and there is a *Hampshire* in America as well as in England; but, still, these are proper names, because the former is not common to *all* men, nor the latter to *all* counties. Proper Nouns take no articles before them, because the extent of their meaning is clearly pointed out in the word itself. In *figurative* language, of which you will know more by-and-by, we sometimes, however, use the article; as, "Goldsmith is a very pretty poet, but not to be compared to *the* Popes, *the* Drydens, or *the* Otways." And again; "I wish I had the wit of *a* *Swift*." We also use the definite article before proper Nouns when a common Noun is understood to be left out; as, *The Delaware*, meaning the *River Delaware*. Also when we speak of more than one person of the same name; as, *the Henriess, the Edwards*.

A very important difference in the use of proper and common nouns is, that the former are written with a capital letter, and the latter are not. This is the general rule, and it is generally observed; but some writers begin every word they think important with a capital letter, and nobody is more peculiar in this respect than Cobbett himself. He writes *noun*, you see, with a capital, although it is a common noun. Formerly every noun used to be written with a capital letter, as is done in German till this day. Thomas Carlyle is another singular punctuator and capitalizer; but he is singular in all things.

**41. THE NUMBERS.** These are the *Singular* and the *Plural*. The Singular is the original word; and, in general, the Plural is formed by adding an *s* to the singu-

lar, as *dog, dogs*. But though the greater part of our Nouns form their plurals from the singular in this simple manner, there are many which do not; while there are some Nouns which have no plural number at all, and some which have no singular. Therefore, considering the above to be the FIRST RULE, I shall add other rules with regard to the Nouns which do not follow that Rule.—The SECOND RULE. Nouns, the singular numbers of which end in *ch*, *s*, *sh*, or *x*, require *es* to be added in order to form their plural number; as, *church, churches; brush, brushes; lass, lasses; fox, foxes*.—The THIRD RULE is that Nouns which end in *y*, when the *y* has a consonant coming immediately before it, change the *y* into *ies* in forming their plurals; as, *quantity, quantities*. But you must mind that if the *y* be not immediately preceded by a consonant, the words follow the *First Rule*, and take only an *s* in addition to their singular; as, *day, days*. I am the more anxious to guard you against error as to this matter, because it is very common to see men of high rank and profession writing *vallies, vollies, attornies, correspondencies, conveniencies*, and the like, and yet all these are erroneous. *Correspondence* and *inconvenience* should have simply an *s*; for they end in *e*, and not in *y*.—The FOURTH RULE is, that Nouns which end in a single *f*, or in *fe*, form their plurals by changing the *f*, or *fe*, into *ves*; as, *loaf, loaves; wife, wives*. But this rule has exceptions, in the following words, which follow the *First Rule*: *Dwarf, scarf, mischief, handkerchief, chief, relief, grief*, and others. The two last are seldom used in the plural number; but, as they sometimes are, I have included them.—The FIFTH RULE is, that the following Nouns have their plural in *en*; *man, men; woman, women; ox, oxen; child, children*. And *brethren* is sometimes used as the plural of *brother*.—The SIXTH RULE is, that all which nature, or art, or habit, has made plural, have no singular; as, *ashes, annals, bel- lows, bowels, thanks, breeches, entrails, lungs, scissors,*



*snuffers, tongs, wages*, and some others. There are also some Nouns which have no plurals, such as those which express the qualities, or propensities, or feelings, of the mind or heart; as, *honesty, meekness, compassion*. There are, further, several names of herbs, metals, minerals, liquids, and of fleshy substances, which have no plurals; to which may be added the names of almost all sorts of grain. There are exceptions here; for while *wheat* has no plural, *oats* has seldom any singular. But all these words, and others which are irregular, in a similar way, are of such very common use that you will hardly ever make a mistake in applying them; for I will not suppose it possible for my dear James to fall into either the company or the language of those who talk, and even write, about *barleys, wheats, clovers, flours, grasses, and malts*. There remain to be noticed, however, some words which are too irregular in the forming of their plurals to be brought under any distinct head even of irregularity. I will, therefore, insert these as they are used in both numbers.

SINGULAR.	PLURAL.	SINGULAR.	PLURAL.
Die,	Dice,	Goose,	Geese.
Mouse,	Mice,	Penny,	Pence,
Louse,	Lice,	Tooth,	Teeth,
Deer,	Deer,	Foot,	Feet.

*Die, dice.* This is the little cubic implement of the gamester; but the more worthy implement of the die-sinker is regular; *die, dies*. You must not confound this with the *dye* and *dyes* of the dyer. It is customary to change *penny* to *pence* when speaking of a sum of money; but, in speaking of penny-pieces, the word is regular; as, I have a pocketful of pennies. By-the-bye, all such words as this word *pocketful* are also regular; three *pocketfuls*, four *spoonfuls*, five *shovelfuls*. Three *pocketsful* would be quite another thing. Then again, we must, from the nature of the words, say *mothers-in-law, cousins-german, courts-martial*; for the words *in-law, german*, and *martial*, are adjectives or qualifying words, and adjectives, in English, never make any change to express number. *Englishman* and *Frenchman* become *Englishmen* and *Frenchmen*;

but not *all* the nationalities ending in *man* become *men*; there are the *Romans*, the *Normans*, and the *Germans*, brave manly races, no doubt, but who will say that the *Mussulmans*, *Turkomans* and *Ottomans* deserve to be called men?

Most of the nouns ending in *o*, add *es* to form the plural; as, negro, negroes. There are only a few exceptions; as, folio, quarto, duodecimo, piano, nuncio, cameo, which follow the general rule. I think it useless to clap down every one of the exceptions; for, in the first place, usage is gradually changing the form of some of these words (*motto*, *portico*); and, in the second place, the reader can always, when necessary, find the desired information by reference to the dictionary. "I always *did* admire that speech!" were the sarcastic words of Mr. Butler in reply to one of Mr. Bingham's speeches. I may say the same thing, unsarcastically, of the reply of a young candidate for the bar, who, on being asked some isolated, unimportant question, said, "I could find that out in two minutes by reference to an encyclopedia."

There are some nouns, with a plural form but a singular meaning, that are always used in the singular. "The *molasses* is sticky. The *measles* is spreading. What is the *news*? He has made a *series* of blunders. The *pains* he has taken to repair them is remarkable. *Mathematics* (physics, optics, &c.) is an interesting science." Look, therefore, to the *meaning* and not the *form* of the word.

*Deer*, *sheep*, *swine*, *vermin*, are the same in both singular and plural; but *snipe*, *trout*, *salmon*, *fish*, and the like, become plural when *number* is signified, and singular when *quantity* is signified. "Here are two snipes; I have shot a quantity of snipe. Here are three fishes, three salmons; I have caught a lot of fish, of salmon." *Dozen* and *pair* are used like *hundred* and *thousand*; that is, singular with any other number, but plural without any other number. "I saw *dozens* of those creatures; they walked in *pairs*; I shot five *dozen* partridges and bought six *pair* of pigeons. Five *hundred* men; there were *hundreds* of men."

In some compound nouns, both parts are made plural: man-servant, men-servants; woman-servant, women-servants; knight-templar, knights-templars. To prevent a confusion of things, we must add 's to figures and letters to indicate the plural: "I want three 5's and four 6's. Mind your p's and q's, and dot your i's." There are a number of names of persons and things in war affairs that do not make any change for the plural; as,

300 foot (meaning foot-soldiers, or infantry).

400 horse (meaning horse-soldiers, or cavalry).

100 cannon; although we also say, many cannons; a number of cannons.

500 head (of cattle).

40 yoke of oxen.

50 sail (meaning ships).

This is a practice that seems to come from the German language, in which words of measure or quantity do not, generally, change to indicate plurality. *Drei Pfund, zehn Fuss, vier Zoll.*

Among proper nouns, the only peculiarity is one concerning the young ladies; for in speaking of them, you may give their title or their name the sign of the plural; you may say, the *Misses Campbell* or the *Miss Campbells*, just as you please. The latter is, I think, the more common usage, and the one that is likely to prevail; for it is more natural than the former, and prevents confounding the young ladies with their mamma, Mrs. Campbell. (How is it, by-the-way, that most of the children in this country say *mam'ma* and *pap'a* instead of *mam-ma'* and *pa-pa'*, which is the proper pronunciation?) In addressing people, in conversation, we say *sir* to one person, and *gentlemen* to several; *miss* (or Miss So-and-So) to one, and *ladies* to several. Good morning, sir. Good morning, gentlemen. Good morning, miss (or Miss Jennie). Good morning, ladies. And here let me throw in, without any extra charge, a bit of information for my young reader, which has something to do with politeness as well as with grammar; namely, that when you meet two persons in the street, only one of whom you know, it is proper for you to address both while saluting them: Good morning, gentlemen.

Just as the girls get Miss, the boys ought to get Master. This, however, is more common in England than in this country. There the school-boy gets sounder floggings than he does here; but they don't rob him of his title; he is still Master Charles or Master Willie, even if he be flogged every day.

42. THE GENDERS. In the French language, and many other languages, every Noun is of the masculine or of the feminine gender. *Hand*, for instance, is of the feminine, and *arm* of the masculine; *pen* of the feminine, and *paper* of the masculine. This is not the case with our language, which, in this respect, has followed the order of nature. The names of all *males* are of the masculine

gender; the names of all *females* are of the feminine gender; and all other Nouns are of the *neuter gender*. And you must observe that, even in speaking of living creatures, of which we do not know the gender, we consider them to be of the *neuter*. In strictness of language, we could not, perhaps, apply the term *gender* to things destitute of all sexual properties; but, as it is applied with perfect propriety in the case of males and females, and as the application in the case of inanimate or vegetable matter can lead to no grammatical error, I have thought it best to follow, in this respect, the example of other grammarians. It may be said that the rule which I have here laid down as being without any exception, has many exceptions; for that, in speaking of a *ship*, we say *she* and *her*. And you know our country folks in Hampshire call almost everything *he* or *she*. Sailors have, for ages, called their vessels *shes*, and it has been found easier to adopt than to eradicate the vulgarity, which is not only tolerated but cherished by that just admiration in which our country holds the species of skill and of valor to which it owes much of its greatness and renown. It is curious to observe that country laborers give the feminine appellations to those things only which are more closely identified with themselves, and by the qualities and condition of which their own efforts and their character as workmen are affected. The mower calls his scythe a *she*; the ploughman calls his plough a *she*; but a prong, or a shovel, or a harrow, which passes promiscuously from hand to hand, and which is appropriated to no particular laborer, is called a *he*. It was, doubtless, from this sort of habitual attachment that our famous maritime solecism arose. The deeds of laborers in the fields and of artizans in their shops are not of public interest sufficiently commanding to enable them to break in upon the principles of language; if they were, we should soon have as many *hes* and *shes* as the French, or any other nation in the world.

43. While, however, I lay down this rule as required by strict grammatical correctness, I must not omit to observe that the license allowed to figurative language enables us to give the masculine or feminine gender to inanimate objects. This has justly been regarded as a great advantage in our language. We can, whenever our subject will justify it, transform into masculine, or into feminine, nouns which are, strictly speaking, neuter; and thus, by giving the functions of life to inanimate objects, enliven and elevate our style, and give to our expressions great additional dignity and force.

This is the figure called personification, which may be illustrated by such examples as these: "Grim-visaged *War* hath smoothed *his* wrinkled front." "*Peace* hath *her* victories no less renowned than *War*." "I care not, *Fortune*, what you me deny; you cannot rob me of free *Nature's* grace; you cannot shut the windows of the sky, through which *Aurora* shows *her* brightening face." Notice that a noun personified is always spelled with a capital letter; and that the noun is made masculine or feminine according to its nature.

Some grammarians speak of a fourth gender, the *common* gender. Nouns that are common to both genders, they call such; as, friend, parent, cook, slave. But there is really no necessity for such a distinction. When I speak of a friend, I certainly know whether that friend is man or woman, and it is very easy to let my hearer or reader know, too, if necessary. If I do not indicate it by the pronoun, my hearer or reader may assume that the friend is man or woman, as he thinks fit; but he cannot think of him or her as both at once. Indeed the gender is usually indicated by the context; that is, by the parts of the discourse preceding and succeeding the word in question. I can hardly speak of a person without using *he* or *she*. The Germans generally add *in* to the masculine noun to make it feminine, as, Freund, Freundinn; the French generally add *e* to the masculine form; as, servant, servante; and the only form in English that is regular is adding *ess* to the masculine, or changing its ending into *ess*; as, mayor, mayoress; hunter, huntress; actor, actress; count, countess; duke, duchess. As this, however, can be applied to but comparatively few words in our language, we are obliged to make use of various expedients to indicate gender; as, dog-fox, bitch-fox;

cock-sparrow, hen-sparrow; he-goat, she-goat; male cook, female cook. Generally, however, in speaking of animals, and also of infants, the distinction of sex is not observed; that is to say, these are usually spoken of in the neuter gender. "What a handsome bird *it* is! Look at that dog! What a noble creature *it* is! Did you see the baby? What an interesting child *it* is!" When we speak of any bird or animal distinguished for its boldness, size, or other quality peculiar to the male, we usually give it the masculine gender, even if its sex is not known. Such are, for instance, the horse or steed, the eagle, the condor, the mastiff, the St. Bernard or Newfoundland dog, and the like. Of course, all animals are personified in fables.

As the words *male* and *female* carry a rather animalish significance with them, we sometimes say a *lady-friend*, a *gentleman-rider*, a *boy-singer*. Somebody has observed that the words over the public-school entrances, "Entrance for males," "Entrance for females," sound as if they were entrances for so many little he-bears and she-bears, and therefore prefers "Entrance for boys," "Entrance for girls." It is far better to speak, for instance, of a country being governed by a woman than by a female.

44. THE CASES. The word *case*, as applied to the concerns of life, has a variety of meanings, or of different shades of meaning; but its general meaning is *state of things*, or *state of something*. Thus we say, "In *that case*, I agree with you." Meaning, "that being *the state of things*, or that being *the state of the matter*, I agree with you." Lawyers are said "to make out *their case* ; or not to make out *their case* ;" meaning *the state of the matter* which they have undertaken to prove. So, when we say that a horse is *in good case*, we mean that he is in a *good state*. Nouns may be in different *states*, or *situations*, as to other Nouns, or other words. For instance, a Noun may be the name of a person who *strikes* a horse, or of a person who *possesses* a horse, or of a person whom a horse *kicks*. And these different situations, or states, are, therefore, called *cases*.

45. You will not fully comprehend the use of these distinctions till you come to the Letter on *Verbs* ; but it

is necessary to explain here the nature of these *cases*, in order that you may be prepared well for the use of the terms, when I come to speak of the Verbs. In the Latin language each Noun has several *different endings*, in order to denote the different cases in which it may be. In our language there is but one of the cases of Nouns which is expressed or denoted by a change in the ending of the Noun; and of this change I will speak presently.

46. There are three Cases: the *Nominative*, the *Possessive*, and the *Objective*. A Noun is in the *Nominative* case when it denotes a person, or thing, which *does* something or *is* something; as, *Richard strikes*; *Richard is good*.

47. A Noun is in the *Possessive* case when it names a person or thing that *possesses* some other person or thing, or when there is one of the persons or things *belonging* to the other; as, *Richard's hat*; *the mountain's top*; *the nation's fleet*. Here *Richard*, *mountain*, and *nation*, are in the *possessive case*, because they denote persons or things which *possess* other persons or things, or have other persons or things *belonging* to them. And here is that change in the ending of the Noun, of which I spoke above. You see that *Richard*, *mountain*, *nation*, has, each of them, an *s* added to it, and a mark of *elision* over; that is to say, a *comma*, placed above the line, between the last letter of the word and the *s*. This is done for the purpose of distinguishing this case from the plural number; or, at least, it answers the purpose in all cases where the plural of the Noun would end in an *s*; though there are different opinions as to the origin of its use. In Nouns which do not end their plural in *s*, the mark of elision would not appear to be absolutely necessary. We might write *mans* mind, *womans* heart, but it is best to use the mark of elision. When plural Nouns end with *s*, you must not add an *s* to form the possessive case, but put the elision mark only after the *s* which ends

the Noun; as, *mountains'* tops; *nations'* fleets; *lasses'* charms. Observe, however, that, in *every* instance, the possessive case may be expressed by a turn of the words; as, *the hat of Richard*; *the top of the mountain*; *the fleet of the nation*; *the mind of man*; and so on. The Nouns, notwithstanding this turn of the words, are still in the possessive case; and, as to when one mode of expression is best, and when the other, it is a matter which must be left to taste.

48. A noun is in the *Objective* case when the person or thing that it names or denotes is the *object* or *end* of some act or of some movement, of some kind or other; Richard *strikes Peter*; Richard gave a blow *to Peter*; Richard goes *after Peter*; Richard *hates Peter*; Richard *wants arms*; Richard seeks *after fame*; falsehood leads *to mischief*; oppression *produces resistance*. Here you see that all these Nouns in the objective case are the *object*, the *end*, or the *effect*, of something *done* or *felt* by some person or thing, and which other person or thing is in the nominative case.

That is to say, a noun is alawys the object of one of two things, a transitive verb or a preposition. I don't think there is anything that enables one to understand this matter of case so well as a proper comprehension of the difference between the transitive and the intransitive verb. I know I never understood it until I learned what a transitive verb was.—We have seen that verbs are words expressing *action* or a *state of being*. Now watch. “I *walk* in the field; I *run* every day; I *dream* very often; I *live* in Hoboken.” Here the verbs *walk*, *run*, *dream*, *live*, express an action which does not pass from the actor or subject; it is confined to him; does not *pass over* to any thing; it is therefore intransitive. “I walk a *horse*; I run a *grist-mill*; I dream bad *dreams*; I live the *lie* down.” Here the action passes from the actor to something else; it *goes over* to something; the verb is, therefore, *transitive*. Now wherever this is the case, wherever the action passes to some object, that object or thing or noun is in the objective case. Again: “The boy is choking”—“the boy is choking the cat.” In the first instance, the verb is intransitive; in the second, it is transitive, and “cat” is conse-



quently in the objective case. Besides the transitive verb, there is, as I have said, only one other thing that can put a noun in the objective case, and that is the *preposition*, which always *governs* the objective case, or puts whatever thing follows it in the objective case. You notice this in the above examples of Cobbett's; noun each time comes after a transitive verb or a preposition. In the examples I gave you with *the desk* (Letter III, par. 29), that word is invariably in the objective case. As to the nominative case (the subject), the name of the person or thing that *does, is, or suffers* something is in that case. Notice that a noun following the verb *to be* is *always* in the nominative case. The Germans, in their expressive language, call these three cases the *who-case*, the *whose-case*, and the *whom-case*. Just try this, and you will see that the nominative answers to *Who?* the possessive to *Whose?* and the objective to *Whom?*

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## LETTER VI.

### ETYMOLOGY OF PRONOUNS.

MY DEAR JAMES :

49. You will now refer to paragraphs 17, 18, and 19, in Letter III; which paragraphs will refresh your memory as to the general nature and use of *Pronouns*. Then, in proceeding to become well acquainted with this Part of Speech, you will first observe that there are four classes, or descriptions, of Pronouns: first, the *Personal*; second, the *Relative*; third, the *Demonstrative*; and, fourth, the *Indefinite*.

50. In PERSONAL PRONOUNS there are four things to be considered: the person, the number, the gender, and the case.

51. There are *three persons*. The Pronoun which represents, or stands in the place of, the name of the person who speaks, is called the *first person*; that which stands in the place of the name of the person who is spoken to, is called the *second person*; that which stands

in the place of the name of the person who is spoken of, is called the *third person*. For example: “*I* am asking *you* about *him*.” This circumstance of *person* you will by-and-by find to be of great moment; because, as you will see, the *verbs* vary their endings sometimes to correspond with the *person* of the Pronoun; and, therefore you ought to pay strict attention to it at the outset.

52. The *number* is either singular or plural, and the Pronouns vary their spelling to express a difference of number; as in this table, which shows, at once, all the persons and all the numbers.

	SINGULAR.	PLURAL.
First person	I,	We.
Second person	'Thou,	You.
Third person	He,	They.

53. The next thing is the *gender*. The Pronouns of the first and second person have no changes to express gender; but the third person singular has changes for that purpose: *he*, *she*, or *it*; and I need not point out to you the cases where one of these ought to be used instead of the other.

54. The *case* is the last thing to be considered in personal Pronouns. The meaning of the word *case*, as used in the rules of Grammar, I have fully explained to you in Letter V, paragraph 44. In paragraphs 45, 46, 47, and 48, in the same Letter, I have treated of the distinction between the cases. Read all those paragraphs again before you proceed further: for now you will find their meaning more clearly explained to you; because the personal Pronouns, and also some of the other Pronouns, have *different endings*, or are composed of *different letters*, in order to point out the different cases in which they are: as, *he*, *his*, *him*.

55. The personal Pronouns have, like the nouns, three cases: the *Nominative*, the *Possessive*, and the *Objective*.

The following table exhibits the whole of them at one view, with all the circumstances of person, number, gender, and case.

### SINGULAR NUMBER.

	<i>Nominative.</i>	<i>Possessive.</i>	<i>Objective.</i>
First Person	I,	{ My, Mine, }	Me.
Second Person	Thou,	{ Thy, Thine, }	Thee.
Third Pers.	Masc. Gen. He,	His,	Him.
	Femin. " She,	{ Her, Hers, }	Her.
	Neuter " It,	Its,	It.

### PLURAL NUMBER.

	<i>Nominative.</i>	<i>Possessive.</i>	<i>Objective.</i>
First Person	We,	{ Our, Ours, }	Us.
Second Person	You,	{ Your, Yours, }	You.
Third Pers.	Masc. Gen. They,	{ Their, Theirs, }	Them.
	Femin. " They,		
	Neuter " They,		

56. Upon this table there are some remarks to be attended to. In the possessive cases of *I*, *Thou*, *She*, *We*, *You*, and *They*, there are two different words: as, *My*, or *Mine*; but you know that the former is used when followed by the name of the person or thing possessed; and that the latter is used when not so followed; as, "This is *my* pen; this pen is *mine*." And it is the same with regard to the possessive cases of *Thou*, *She*, *We*, *You*, and *They*.

The same grammarians that wish to call every word that stands before a noun an *adjective*, call these words, *my*, *thy*, *his*, *your*, *their*, possessive adjectives; they call them such when coming directly before a noun, and pronouns when standing alone. I know no change more utterly useless and confusing. Do they not always stand in the place of nouns in the possessive case? "I met Tom Jones, and gave him a message from *his* father." Does this *his* not stand for *Tom's*, a noun in the possessive case? When Billy Clutterbuck says, "This is *my* dog," does it not mean, This is Billy Clutterbuck's dog?

57. *Thou* is here given as the *second person singular*; but common custom has set aside the rules of Grammar in this case; and though we, in particular cases, still make use of *Thou* and *Thee*, we generally make use of *You* instead of either of them. According to ancient rule and custom this is not correct; but what a whole people adopts and universally practises must, in such cases, be deemed correct, and to be a superseding of ancient rule and custom.

58. Instead of *you* the ancient practice was to put *ye* in the nominative case of the second person plural; but this practice is now laid aside, except in cases which very seldom occur; but whenever *ye* is made use of, it must be in the *nominative*, and *never* in the *objective*, case. I may, speaking to several persons, say, "*Ye* have injured me," but not "I have injured *ye*."

There is nothing that more strikingly displays the spirit of caste in Germany than the fact that there are *four* different ways in German of saying *you*, according to the rank or social position of the person addressed (*Sie*, *du*, *ihr*, *er*). In English, we say *you* to the President, and *you* to a beggar; *you* to a king, and *you* to an assemblage of kings; and this is characteristic of the sturdy love of fair play (a word for which there is no proper equivalent in German) among the English race. Among German students, there are only two classes worthy of respect; those that *are* students, and those that *have been* students; all the rest are cattle.—*Ye* is never used now except in the solemn style, nominative plural: O ye boys of America, beware of the cheap story-papers, and the cheap and

nasty story-books, for they carry the seeds of a disease that kill soul and body, something far worse than small-pox or yellow-fever!

It is a remarkable fact that many of our obsolete expressions are retained for the solemn style. *Thou, thy, thee* are now used in prayer, and in solemn compositions, such as Coleridge's Hymn to Mont Blanc, or Milton's Paradise Lost.

59. The words *self* and *selves* are sometimes added to the personal Pronouns; as *myself, thyself, himself*; but, as these compounded words are liable to no variations that can possibly lead to error, it will be useless to do any thing further than just to notice them.

60. The Pronoun *it*, though a *personal* Pronoun, does not always stand for, or at least appear to stand for, any *noun* whatever; but is used in order to point out *a state of things*, or the *cause* of something produced. For instance: "*It* freezed hard last night, and *it* was so cold, that *it* was with great difficulty the travellers kept on their journey." Now, *what* was it that freezed so hard? Not the *frost*; because the frost is the effect, and not the cause of freezing. We cannot say that it was the *weather* that freezed; because the freezing constituted in part the weather itself. No; the Pronoun *it* stands, in this place, for *state of things*, or *circumstances*; and this sentence might be written thus: "The freezing was so hard last night, and the cold was so severe, that the travellers found great difficulty in keeping on their journey." Let us take another example or two: "*It* is a frost this morning. *It* will rain to-night. *It* will be fine to-morrow." That is to say, "A state of things called frost exists this morning; a state of things called rain will exist to-night; and to-morrow a state of things called fine weather." Another example: "*It* is delightful to see brothers and sisters living in uninterrupted love to the end of their days." That is to say, "The state of things which exhibits brothers and sisters living in uninterrupted love to the end of their days is delightful to see." The Pronoun

*it* is, in this its impersonal capacity, used in a great variety of instances; but I forbear to extend my remarks on the subject here; because those remarks will find a more suitable place when I come to another part of my instructions. I have said enough here to prevent the puzzling that might have arisen from your perceiving that the Pronoun *it* was sometimes used without your being able to trace its connection with any noun either expressed or understood

61. In order, however, further to illustrate this matter in this place, I will make a remark or two upon the use of the word *there*. Example: “*There are* many men, who have been at Latin schools for years, and who, at last, cannot write six sentences in English correctly,” Now, you know, the word *there*, in its usual sense, has reference to *place*; yet it has no such reference here. The meaning is that “Many men *are in existence* who have been at Latin schools.” Again: “*There never was* any thing so beautiful as that flower.” That is to say, “Any thing so beautiful as that flower *never existed*, or *never was in being*.”

It may, perhaps, be useful for you to know (especially if you intend to pass an examination) that the word *there* in the sentences here given is called an *expletive*, which means a word used merely to fill up a vacancy. You can always leave it out without altering the sense. “There is a tree in the garden” is nothing but “a tree is in the garden.” And you will now, perhaps, be better able to understand Pope’s satirical lines on the works of poor authors:

“While *expletives* their feeble aid do join,  
And ten slow words oft creep in one dull line.”

62. We now come to the RELATIVE PRONOUNS, of which class there are only *three*; namely, *Who*, *Which*, and *That*. The two latter always remain the same, through all numbers, genders, and cases; but the Pronoun *who* changes its endings in order to express the possessive and objective cases; as, *who*, *whose*, *whom*.

63. These Pronouns are called *relative*, because they always *relate* directly to some noun or some personal Pronoun, or to some combination of words, which is called the *antecedent*; that is to say, the person or thing *going before*. Thus: "The *soldier who* was killed at the siege." *Soldier* is the antecedent. Again: "The men, if I am rightly informed, *who* came hither last night, *who* went away this morning, *whose* money you have received, and to *whom* you gave a receipt, are natives of South America." *Men* is here the *antecedent*; and in this sentence there are all the variations to which this Pronoun is liable.

64. *Who*, *whose*, and *whom* cannot be used correctly as relatives to any Nouns or Pronouns which do not represent *men*, *women*, or *children*. It is not correct to say, the horse, or the dog, or the tree, *who* was so and so; or to whom was done this or that; or whose color, or any thing else, was such or such. But the word *That*, as a relative Pronoun, may be applied to nouns of all sorts; as, the *boy that* ran; the *horse that* galloped; the *tree that* was blowed down.

The real reason for this use of the word *that*, however, is because we must sometimes find a pronoun that will stand for both *men and animals* together: "The horses and the riders *that* we saw are the favorites." And concerning the pronoun *who*, a change has taken place since Cobbett's time: we can now use it in the possessive case (whose) with reference to things as well as persons. "The mountain whose top is covered with snow," is considered easier and more elegant than "The mountain the top of which is covered with snow." The poets began to use this form, and prose-writers now use it too. By-the-way, you will notice that Cobbett is a little peculiar in using some irregular verbs in the regular form; as, *blowed* and *froze* for *blown* and *froze*. More of this farther on.

65. *Which*, as a relative Pronoun, is confined to irrational creatures, and here it may be used as a relative indifferently with *that*; as, the *horse which* galloped; the

*tree which* was blowed down. This application of the relative *which* solely to irrational creatures is, however, of modern date; for, in the Lord's Prayer, in the English Church Service, we say, "Our Father *which* art in heaven." In the American Liturgy this error has been corrected; and they say, "Our Father *who* art in heaven."

66. I cannot, even for the present, quit these relative Pronouns without observing to you that they are words of vast importance, and that more errors, and errors of greater consequence, arise from a misapplication of them than from the misapplication of almost all the other classes of words put together. The reason is this, they are *relatives*, and they frequently stand as the representatives of that which has gone before, and which stands in a distant part of the sentence. This will be more fully explained when I come to the *Syntax* of Pronouns; but the matter is of such great moment that I could not refrain from giving you an intimation of it here.

67. The DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS are so called because they more particularly mark or demonstrate the nouns before which they are placed, or for which they sometimes stand. They are, *This*, *These*, *That*, *Those*, and *What*. The use of them is so well known, and is liable to so little error, that my chief object in giving them this separate place is to show you the difference between *That*, when a *relative*, and when *not a relative*. Take an example: "*That* man is not the man, as far as I am able to discover, *that* came hither last night." The first of these *Thats* does not *relate* to the man; it merely points him out; but the latter *relates* to him, carries you back to him, and supplies the place of repetition. This same word, *That*, is sometimes a *Conjunction*; as, "*That* man is not the man, as far as I can discover, *that* came hither last night, and *that* was so ill *that* he could hardly walk." The relative is repeated in the third *That*; but



the fourth *That* is merely a conjunction serving to *connect* the effect of the illness with the cause.

“I say that that *that* that that author uses is false.” Try and discover the four different parts of speech represented by the word *that* in this sentence.—*This, that*, and their plural, *these, those*, are, like the articles, called limiting adjectives when used directly before nouns; *this* hat, *these* hats. When used with reference to things pointed at, *these* refers to things nearer at hand than *those*.

68. Perhaps a profound examination of the matter would lead to a proof of *That* being always a Pronoun; but, as such examination would be more curious than useful, I shall content myself with having clearly shown you the difference in its offices, as a *relative*, as a *demonstrative*, and as a *conjunction*.

69. *What*, together with *who, whose, whom, and which*, are employed in *asking questions*; and are sometimes ranged under a separate head, and called *Interrogative Pronouns*. I have thought this unnecessary; but here is an observation of importance to attend to; for *which*, though as a *relative* it cannot be applied to the intellectual species, is, as an interrogative, properly applied to that species; as, “*Which* man was it who spoke to you?”

70. *What* sometimes stands for both noun and relative Pronoun; as, “*What* I want is well known.” That is to say, “*The thing which* I want is well known.” Indeed, *what* has, in all cases, this extended signification; for when, in the way of inquiry as to words which we have not clearly understood, we say, *What?* our full meaning is, “Repeat to us *that which* you have said,” or, “the *words which* you have spoken.”

In this sentence, “I gave him *what* (that which) he wanted,” *what* is a relative pronoun; but in this sentence, “I gave him *what* funds he wanted,” it is an adjective. Notice that we always say *that*, never *what*, after *every thing, any thing, nothing, something, all things*.

71. The INDETERMINATE PRONOUNS are so called

because they express their objects in a general and indeterminate manner. Several of them are also *adjectives*. It is only where they are employed alone, that is to say, without nouns, that they ought to be regarded as Pronouns. For instance: “*One* is always hearing of the unhappiness of *one* person or *another*.” The first of these *ones* is a Pronoun; the last is an Adjective, as is also the word *another*; for a noun is *understood* to follow, though it is not expressed. These pronouns are as follows: *One, any, each, none, some, other, every, either, many, whoever, whatever, neither*, and some few others, but all of them words invariable in their orthography, and all of very common use.

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## LETTER VII.

## ETYMOLOGY OF ADJECTIVES.

MY DEAR JAMES:

72. In Letter III, paragraph 21, I have described what an *Adjective* is. You will, therefore, now read that paragraph carefully over, before we proceed in studying the contents of the present Letter.

73. The Adjectives have no changes to express gender or case; but they have changes to express *degrees of comparison*. As Adjectives describe the qualities and properties of nouns, and as these may be possessed in a degree higher in one case than in another case, such words have degrees of comparison; that is to say, changes in their endings, to suit these varying circumstances. A tree may be *high*, but another may be *higher*, and a third may be the *highest*. Adjectives have, then, these three degrees: the first degree, or rather, the primitive word, called the *Positive*; the second, the *Comparative*; the third, the *Superlative*. For the forming of these degrees I shall

give you *four rules*; and if you pay strict attention to these rules, you will need to be told very little more about this Part of Speech.

74. *First Rule.* Adjectives in general, which end in a consonant, form their comparative degree by adding *er* to the positive, and form their superlative degree by adding *est* to the positive; as,

POSITIVE.	COMPARATIVE.	SUPERLATIVE.
Rich,	Richer,	Richest.

75. *Second Rule.* Adjectives, which end in *e*, add, in forming their comparative, only an *r*, and in forming their superlative, *st*; as,

POSITIVE.	COMPARATIVE.	SUPERLATIVE.
Wise,	Wiser,	Wisest.

76. *Third Rule.* When the positive ends in *d*, *g*, or *t*, and when these consonants are, at the same time, preceded by a *single vowel*, the consonant is doubled in forming the comparative and superlative; as,

POSITIVE.	COMPARATIVE.	SUPERLATIVE.
Red,	Redder,	Reddest.
Big,	Bigger,	Biggest.
Hot,	Hotter,	Hottest.

But, if the *d*, *g*, or *t*, be preceded by another consonant, or by more than one vowel, the final consonant is not doubled in the forming of the two latter degrees; as,

POSITIVE.	COMPARATIVE.	SUPERLATIVE.
Kind,	Kinder,	Kindest.
Neat,	Neater,	Neatest.

77. *Fourth Rule.* When the positive ends in *y*, preceded by a consonant, the *y* changes into *ie* in the other degrees.

POSITIVE.	COMPARATIVE.	SUPERLATIVE.
Lovely,	Lovelier,	Loveliest.
Pretty,	Prettier,	Prettiest.

78. There are some Adjectives which can be reduced to no rule, and which must be considered as irregular; as,

POSITIVE.	COMPARATIVE.	SUPERLATIVE.
Good,	Better,	Best.
Bad,	Worse,	Worst.
Little,	Less,	Least.
Much,	More,	Most.

79. Some Adjectives can have no degrees of comparison, because their signification admits of no augmentation; as, *all, each, every, any, several, some*; and all the numerical Adjectives; as, *one, two, three; first, second, third*.

But there are some other adjectives that do not admit of comparison. Consider, for a moment, such words as *true, round, square, perfect, dead*. Properly speaking, nothing can be truer, rounder, squarer, more perfect, or deader than another; yet, in popular speech, these words are often used in the comparative or superlative degree. How often we hear people say, "I never saw any thing more perfect;" "this figure is not quite so round as that;" and the like. I do not mean to say that such expressions are absolutely unpermissible; only that they are not strictly correct. To say "more nearly round" or "more nearly perfect" would be more nearly correct. These expressions, however, occur in the rapid flow of conversation, and perhaps express the idea intended better than a more correct (notice these very words) or more choice expression. Editors sometimes speak of a political question as "the deadest of all dead issues;" which is very forcible language; and there is a comparison implied in the familiar expressions, "dead as a door-nail, dead as Julius Caesar."— I may here mention that the word *old*, in its regular form, *old, older, oldest*, is used with reference to persons and things in general; while the forms, *elder, eldest*, is used to distinguish kinsfolk or historical personages: my elder brother or nephew, my eldest sister or cousin; the elder Pliny, the elder Brutus, the elder or younger Pitt.

*Far, farther, farthest* are used exclusively with reference to *distance*; but we sometimes use the form *further*, to indicate *something more*, or to point out that we have *something more* to say on a subject. The latter form is also sometimes used as an adjective; have you any *further* objection?

80. Adjectives which end in *most* are superlative, and admit of no change; as, *utmost, uppermost, innermost*.

81. However, you will observe that all Adjectives which admit of comparison may form their degrees by the use of the words *more* and *most*; as,

POSITIVE.	COMPARATIVE.	SUPERLATIVE.
Rich,	More rich,	Most rich.
Tender,	More tender,	Most tender.

When the positive contains but *one syllable*, the degrees are usually formed by adding to the positive according to the four rules. When the positive contains *two syllables*, it is a matter of taste which method you shall use in forming the degrees. The *ear* is, in this case, the best guide. But when the positive contains *more than two syllables*, the degrees must be formed by the use of *more* and *most*. We may say *tender* and *tenderest*, *pleasanter* and *pleasantest*, *prettier* and *prettiest*; but who could tolerate *delicater* and *delicatest*?

Nobody but Thomas Carlyle, who uses *beautifullest, wonderfulest*, and the like. To use another of Carlyle's Germanisms, there is no question but this usage is *unright*.

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## LETTER VIII.

### ETYMOLOGY OF VERBS.

MY DEAR JAMES:

82. The first thing you have to do in beginning your study, as to this important Part of Speech, is to read again very slowly and carefully paragraphs 23, 24, 25, and 26, in Letter III. Having, by well attending to what is said in those paragraphs, learned to distinguish *Verbs* from the words belonging to other Parts of Speech, you will now enter, with a clear head, on an inquiry into the

variations to which the words of this Part of Speech are liable.

83. SORTS OF VERBS. Verbs are considered as *active*, *passive*, or *neuter*. A Verb is called active when it expresses an action which is produced by the nominative of the sentence; as, "Pitt *restrained* the Bank." It is passive when it expresses an action which is received, or endured, by the person or thing which is the nominative of the sentence; as, "the Bank *is restrained*." It is neuter when it expresses simply the state of being, or of existence, of a person or thing; as, "Dick *lies* in bed;" or, when it expresses an action *confined within the actor*.

84. It is of great consequence that you clearly understand these distinctions, because I shall, by-and-by, use these terms very frequently. And in order to give you a proof of the necessity of attending to these distinctions, I will here give you a specimen of the errors which are sometimes committed by those who do not understand Grammar. This last-mentioned Verb, *to lie*, becomes, in the past time, *lay*. Thus: "Dick *lies* on a bed now, but some time ago, he *lay* on the floor." This verb is often confounded with the Verb *to lay*, which is an active Verb, and which becomes, in its past time, *laid*. Thus: "I *lay* my hat on the table to-day, but, yesterday, I *laid* it on the shelf." Let us take another instance, in order the more clearly to explain this matter. A Verb may sometimes be what we call a *neuter* Verb, though it expresses an *action*; but this happens when the action is *confined within the actor*; that is to say, when there is no object *to which the action passes*. *Strike* is clearly an active Verb, because something is *stricken*; a stroke is *given to*, or *put upon*, something. But in the case of *to rise*, though there is an *action*, it passes on to no object; as, *I rise early*. Here is no object to which the action passes. But *to raise* is an active Verb, because the action passes on to an object; as, *I raise a stick, I raise my hand, I raise*

*my head, and also I raise myself;* because, though in this last instance the action is confined to *me*, it is understood that my mind gives the motion to my body. These two Verbs are, in speaking and writing, incessantly confounded; though one is a neuter and the other an active Verb, though one is regular and the other irregular, or though they are not, in any person, time, or mode, composed of the same letters. This confusion could never take place if attention were paid to the *principle* above laid down.

This is one of the hard passages in the gospel of grammar; a passage which, I am sure, has been a stumbling-block to many a poor fellow who has been unable to make head or tail of it. Well do I remember the difficulty I had myself, when I first studied this grammar, in making it out. It is, I now see, no wonder that the matter was very cloudy to me; for even Cobbett, the plainest and clearest of writers, has got into a muddle about it, as I shall presently show.

Look again at my explanation of the difference between the transitive and the intransitive verb (note to paragraph 11). Then remember that Cobbett's "*nominative*" is another word for *subject*, and his "*verb*" another word for *predicate*. "Boys study grammar." These three words form *subject*, *predicate*, and *object*. "Man dies." Here is nothing but *subject* and *predicate*; and you will notice that "study" has an object, while "dies" has not.

I rise at six o'clock. I raise a wall; I raise the price; I raise my voice. You will readily see that the verb *to rise* is intransitive, because it has no object; its action does not pass to anything; and that *to raise* is transitive, because it has an object; its action passes to something, even if it is my own voice, head or hand. Now both these verbs, as used by Cobbett, are in the *active voice*, for the passing or not passing of the action has nothing whatever to do with the verb being in the active or passive voice, but only with its being transitive or intransitive. It is the STATE OF THE SUBJECT (or nominative) alone that determines whether a verb is active or passive. "I rise early. I raise my hand." Both these verbs are in the active voice; for the subject or nominative (I) is *acting*, and not *acted upon*. The verb is in the passive voice where the SUBJECT or NOMINATIVE is ACTED ON; as, I AM raised; but it is in the active voice when the SUBJECT OR NOMINATIVE IS ACTING; as, I rise at five

o'clock. Notice that the verb in the passive voice always consists of some part of the verb *to be* and the past participle of another verb. Cobbett is altogether wrong in saying that "*to raise* is an active verb because it passes on to an object;" it would be active whether the action passed on to an object or not; for, as I have said, it is the STATE of the SUBJECT that determines its activeness or passiveness, and not the verb itself. The passing of the action simply shows that it is *transitive*.

Now observe that this matter of transitive and intransitive verbs is something by itself, and that active and passive voice is also something by itself. It will, perhaps, help you to understand the matter, when I tell you that *no intransitive verb can be used in the passive voice*. You can not say, I am slept, I am dreamt, I am lived. No; only transitive verbs can be used in the passive voice: I am hated, I am robbed, I am punished. These forms come from the verbs *to hate*, *to rob*, *to punish*, all of which take an object, and are therefore transitive; but the forms *to sleep*, *to dream*, *to live*, do not take an object and are therefore intransitive, and cannot be used in the passive voice.

Now, as to that other bugbear, the *neuter* verb, I think we shall not have much difficulty in understanding it. I never learned the meaning of it from Cobbett, I must confess. And here I may inform you that many grammarians discard the term *neuter* altogether, and set *neuter* verbs down simply as intransitive verbs, which, indeed, they are. But you must understand what is meant by a *neuter* verb, any way. You have seen that when a verb is used in the active voice, the subject or nominative of that verb is **ACTING**, and that when one is used in the passive voice, the subject or nominative of that verb is **ACTED ON**. Now, where a *neuter* verb is used, the subject is neither acting nor acted on; it is **NEITHER, NEUTER**. Take an example of all three cases: Tommy *kicks* the pony; Tommy *is kicked* by the pony; Tommy *is* ill. Now in the first case, *kicks* is active, because the subject (Tommy) is acting; in the second case, *is kicked* is passive, because the subject is acted on; and in the third case, it is *neuter*, because the subject is neither acting nor acted on: it is **EXISTENCE WITHOUT ACTION**. Just try if this is not the case with such verbs as *to sit*, *to stand*, *to exist*, *to live*, *to lie*, *to sleep*. When you are sitting, standing, existing, living, etc., you are neither acting nor acted on; you are neither, neuter. Of course, these verbs are intransitive, too; for all neuter verbs are intransitive, but all intransitive verbs are not neuter. There's the rub; there is where



Cobbett makes his mistake: he calls the verb *to rise* neuter, while it is nothing of the sort; it is simply intransitive, and active. The most recent classification of verbs is into *active-transitive*, *active-intransitive*, and *neuter*. He *kicks* the pony; he *rises*; he *lives*. Cobbett, no doubt, followed the grammarians and dictionary-makers of his time.

85. Having thus given you the means of distinguishing the *sorts* of Verbs, I now proceed to matters which are common to all the sorts. There are four things to be considered in a verb; the *person*, the *number*, the *time*, and the *mode*.

86. THE PERSON.—Read again Letter VI, on the Etymology of Pronouns. You will there clearly see the use of this distinction about *Persons*; and, as I have told you, you will find that it is a matter of great consequence; because it will now, at once, be evident to you that, unless the distinction of person be attended to, almost every sentence must be erroneous.

87. The Verb must *agree* in *person* with the *Noun* or the *Pronoun* which is the nominative of the sentence. Look back at Letter V, and at paragraphs 44, 45, 46, and 47, in order to refresh your memory as to the *nominative* and other cases. The Verb, then, must *agree* with the nominative; as, “*I write*; he *writes*.” To say, “*I writes*; he *write* ;” these would be both erroneous.

88. Look back at the explanation about the *persons* in the Etymology of Pronouns in Letter VI. There are *three persons*; but our Verbs have no variation in their spelling, except for *the third person singular*. For we say, “*I write*, you *write*, we *write*, they *write* ;” and only “he, she, or it *writes*.” This, then, is a very plain matter.

89. NUMBER is a matter equally plain, seeing that our Verbs do not, except in one or two instances, vary their endings, to express number. But when several nouns or pronouns come together, care must be taken to make the Verb *agree* with them; as, “Knight and Johnstone *resist*

the tyrants." Not *resists*. But this will be more fully dwelt on in the Syntax.

90. THE TIME.—The Verb has variations to express the *time* of an action; as, "Sidmouth *writes* a Circular Letter; Sidmouth *wrote* a Circular Letter; Sidmouth *will write* a Circular Letter." Again: "The Queen *defies* the tyrants; the Queen *defied* the tyrants; the Queen *will defy* the tyrants." The *Times* of a Verb are, therefore, called the *present*, the *past*, and the *future*.

91. THE MODES.—The *Modes* of Verbs are the *different manners* of expressing an action or a state of being, which manners are sometimes *positive*, sometimes *conditional*, and sometimes *indeterminate*; and there are *changes* or *variations*, in the spelling, or writing, of the Verb, or of the little words used with the Verb, in order to express this difference in *manner* and sense. I will give you an instance: "He *walks* fast." "If he *walk* fast, he will fatigue himself." In most other languages the Verb changes its form very often and very much to make it express the different modes. In ours it does not; because we have little words called *signs*, which we use with the Verbs instead of varying the form of the Verbs themselves. To make this matter clear, I will give you an example of the English compared with the French language in this respect.

E.	F.
I march,	<i>Je marche.</i>
I marched,	<i>Je marchais.</i>
I might march,	<i>Je marchasse.</i>
I should march,	<i>Je marcherais.</i>

There are other variations in the French Verb; but we effect the purposes of these variations by the use of the signs, *shall*, *may*, *might*, *could*, *would*, and others.

92. The Modes are four in number; the *Infinitive*, the *Indicative*, the *Subjunctive*, and the *Imperative*. Besides

these, there are the two *Participles*, of which I shall speak presently.

93. The *Infinitive Mode* is the Verb in its primitive state; as, *to march*. And this is called the *Infinitive* because it is without bounds or limit. It merely expresses the action of marching, without any constraint as to person or number or time. The little word *to* makes, in fact, a *part of the Verb*. This word *to* is, of itself, a *preposition*; but, as prefixed to Verbs, it is merely a *sign* of the Infinitive Mode. In other languages there is no such sign. In the French, for instance, *aller* means *to go*; *écrire* means *to write*. Thus, then, you will bear in mind that in English, the *to* makes a part of the Verb itself, when in the *Infinitive Mode*.

94. The *Indicative Mode* is that in which we express an action, or state of being, positively; that is to say, without any *condition*, or any dependent circumstance. It merely *indicates* the action or state of being, *without being subjoined* to anything which renders the action or state of being dependent on any other action or state of being. Thus: "*He writes*." This is the Indicative.

95. But the *Subjunctive Mode* comes into use when I say, "If he *write*, the guilty tyrants will be ready with their dungeons and axes." In this case there is something *subjoined*; and therefore this is called the *Subjunctive Mode*. Observe, however, that in our language there is no very great use in this distinction of modes; because, for the most part, our little *signs* do the business, and they never vary in the letters of which they are composed. The distinction is useful only as regards the employment of Verbs without the *signs*, and where the signs are left to be understood; as in the above case, "If he (*should*) *write*, the guilty tyrants will be ready." And observe, further, that when the *signs* are used, or understood, the Verb retains its original or primitive form throughout all the persons, numbers, and times.

96. The *Imperative Mode* is mentioned here merely for form's sake. It is that state of the Verb which *commands, orders, bids, calls to, or invokes*; as, *come* hither; *be* good; *march* away; *pay* me. In other languages there are changes in the spelling of the Verbs to answer to this mode; but in ours there are none of these; and therefore the matter is hardly worth notice, except as a mere matter of form.

97. The *Participles*, however, are different in point of importance. They are of two sorts, the *active* and the *passive*. The former ends always in *ing*, and the latter is generally the same as the *past time* of the Verb out of which it grows. Thus: *working* is an active participle, and *worked* a passive participle. They are called participles because they *partake* of the qualities of other Parts of Speech as well as of Verbs. For instance: "I am *working*; *working* is laudable; a *working* man is more worthy of honor than a titled plunderer who lives in idleness." In the first instance, *working* is a Verb, in the second a *Noun*, in the third an *Adjective*. So in the case of the passive participle: I *worked* yesterday; that is *worked* mortar. The first is a Verb, the last an Adjective.

After the indicative, grammarians now insert another mood, called the *potential* mood, which indicates power, permission, possibility, necessity, determination, duty. This mood Cobbett runs into the subjunctive, after the manner of the French. It is that form which necessitates one of "those powerful little words," as he calls them, *may, might, can, must, will, shall, should, would*. This matter of mood, which is quite a difficult subject for beginners, became much clearer to me when I saw how the Germans termed their moods in their expressive language. They call the infinitive mood the *ground-form*; the indicative the *reality-form*; the potential the *possibility-form*; the subjunctive, the *doubt-form*; and the imperative the *commanding-form*. Like the *who-case*, the *whose-case*, and the *whom-case*, these words are far more expressive than the Latin terms we use, which ought to have been left where they belonged, in Latin.

You will perhaps be surprised to see *will* and *shall*, *would* and

*should*, set down as belonging to the potential mood. You will say they belong to the future and the conditional. So they do; but they belong to the potential, too, as I shall show you by-and-by. Take these two examples of the difference between the future and the potential: "I shall write (future) to you, if I can. I *will write* (potential) to you, come what may. You *will do* (future) that to-morrow. You *shall do* (potential) as I tell you." This is one of the most difficult matters in English grammar; a matter which, Cobbett says, foreigners never learn rightly, but which natives learn to use rightly from infancy, and do so without ever thinking of the matter. Extensive reading of good authors and extensive intercourse with good speakers are among the best means of learning the correct use of these words. I have read of an Irishman who, on falling into the river, exclaimed: "I *will* drown, and nobody *shall* help me!" More of this anon. (Note to paragraph 258.)

98. Thus have I gone through all the circumstances of change to which Verbs are liable. I will now give you the complete *conjugation* of a Verb. To *conjugate*, in its usual acceptation, means to *join together*; and, as used by grammarians, it means to place under one view all the *variations* in the form of a Verb; beginning with the Infinitive Mode and ending with the Participle. I will now lay before you, then, the *conjugation* of the Verb *to work*, exhibiting that Verb in all its persons, numbers, times, and modes.

### INFINITIVE MODE.

#### To WORK.

### INDICATIVE MODE.

	<i>Singular.</i>	<i>Plural.</i>
Present Time.	1st Person. I work,	We work.
	2d Person. Thou workest,	You work.
	3d Person. He, she, or it works.	They work.
Past Time.	— I worked,	We worked.
	— Thou workedst,	You worked.
	— He worked,	They worked.
Future Time.	— I shall or will work,	We shall or will work.
	— Thou shalt or wilt work,	You shall or will work.
	— He shall or will work,	They shall or will work.

## SUBJUNCTIVE MODE.

If I work, or may, might, could, would, or should work.			
If thou work, or may	“	“	“ work.
If he, she, or it work, or may	“	“	“ work.
If we work, or may	“	“	“ work.
If you work, or may	“	“	“ work.
If they work, or may	“	“	“ work.

## IMPERATIVE MODE.

Let me work,	Let us work.
Work thou,	Work you.
Let him work,	Let them work.

## PARTICIPLES.

*Active.*—Working.*Passive.*—Worked.

99. Some explanatory remarks are necessary here. The third person singular of the Indicative present used to be written with *eth*; as, *worketh*; but this spelling has long been disused. The *past time* may be formed by *did*; as, *did work*, instead of *worked*; and *do work* may be used in the present time; but, in fact, these little words are a great deal more than mere marks of the *times*. They are used in one time to express the negative of another, or to affirm with more than ordinary emphasis.

100. Grammarians generally make a present and a past time under the Subjunctive Mode; but the truth is that any of the *signs* may apply to the present, past, or future of that mode. These are little words of vast import and of constant use; and though that use is so very difficult to be learned by foreigners, we ourselves never make mistakes with regard to it. The Verb *to be* alone changes its form in order to make a past time in the Subjunctive Mode.

101. As to the *Imperative Mode*, where the pronouns *thou* and *you* are put after the Verb, we seldom put the *thou* and the *you*. We make use of the Verb only, which is quite sufficient.

102. Some grammarians put in their conjugations what they call the *compound times* ; as, I *have worked*, I *had worked*, I *shall have worked*, I *may have worked*, and so on. But this can only serve to fill up a book ; for all these consist merely in the introduction and use of the Verb *to have* in its various parts. In the above conjugation all the *changes* or *variations* of the Verb are exhibited ; and it is those changes and variations which, under the present head, form the important object of our inquiry.

Well, at the risk of incurring the reproach of merely “filling up a book,” or, as the reviewers call it, “padding a book,” I shall give you this one verb entire, in its present form, with its present names for moods and tenses. Do not be afraid ; it will not confuse you, if you will only be patient. There are about six or seven thousand verbs in our language, and they are all, except in the past tense and past participle, conjugated like this. It is in these last two parts that the irregular verbs vary. You cannot utter a single sentence, however short, without a verb ; so, surely, you ought to see this important part of speech from head to foot. Besides, I believe that our present form of laying out the verb is simpler than it was in Cobbett’s time, for the tenses are so arranged that they are more easily remembered. (See next page.)

You will notice that the compound forms are, as Cobbett says, nothing but the past participle, *worked*, and the various forms of the verb *to have*. But the *seeing* it will help you to *remember* it. As to the tenses, consider for a moment how many kinds of time there are in nature. What is the time called in which you now are ? What time is that you had yesterday ? What time is to-morrow ? Well, there are three kinds, *present*, *past*, and *future* ; and in grammar you may say there are really only *three* tenses, with a *tail* to each of them, a *perfect* tail ; and this perfect tail is the compound form of the verb. It is nothing but present, present-*perfect* ; past, past-*perfect* ; future, future-*perfect*. As to the using of them, you will learn that when we come to the Syntax. Then you will notice that there are five moods, just as there are five continents, five oceans, five races of men, and five zones. Notice that the subjunctive has no changes whatever in its endings. This mood, of which common people and common writers know nothing, and which, some writers think, will finally disappear altogether, is

Complete conjugation of the active verb *To Work*.

INFINITIVE MOOD.

*Present tense*—To work.

*Present perfect tense*—To have worked.

INDICATIVE MOOD.

SIMPLE TENSES.

*Present tense.*

I work,  
Thou workest,  
He works,  
We work,  
You work,  
They work,

*Past tense.*

I work,  
Thou workedst,  
He worked,  
We worked,  
You worked,  
They worked,

*Future tense.*

I shall work,  
Thou wilt work,  
He will work,  
We shall work,  
You will work,  
They will work,

*Present tense conditional.*

I should work,  
Thou wouldst work,  
He would work,  
We should work,  
You would work,  
They would work,

*Present tense.*

I may, can, will work,  
Thou mayst, canst, shalt work,  
He may, can, shall work,  
We may, can, shall work,  
You may, can, shall work,  
They may, can, shall work,

*Past tense.*

I might, could, should work,  
Thou mightst, couldst, shouldst work,  
He might could, should work,  
We might, could, should work,  
You might, could, should work,  
They might, could, should work,

SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD.

*Present tense.*

If I work,  
thou work,  
he work,  
we work,  
you work,  
they work,

*Past tense.*

If I worked,  
thou worked,  
he worked,  
we worked,  
you worked,  
they worked,

COMPOUND TENSES.

*Present perfect tense.*

I have worked.  
Thou hast worked.  
He has worked.  
We have worked.  
You have worked.  
They have worked.

*Past perfect tense.*

I had worked.  
Thou hadst worked.  
He had worked.  
We had worked.  
You had worked.  
They had worked.

*Future perfect tense.*

I shall have worked.  
Thou wilt have worked.  
He will have worked.  
We shall have worked.  
You will have worked.  
They will have worked.

*Perfect tense conditional.*

I should have worked.  
Thou wouldst have worked.  
He would have worked.  
We should have worked.  
You would have worked.  
They would have worked.

*Present perfect tense.*

I may, can, will have worked.  
Thou mayst, canst, shalt have worked.  
He may, can, shall have worked.  
We may, can, shall have worked.  
You may, can, shall have worked.  
They may, can, shall have worked.

*Past perfect tense.*

I might, could, should have worked.  
Thou mightst, couldst, shouldst have worked.  
He might, could, should have worked.  
We might, could, should have worked.  
You might, could, should have worked.  
They might, could, should have worked.

*Present perfect tense.*

If I have worked.  
thou have worked.  
he have worked.  
we have worked.  
you have worked.  
they have worked.

*Past perfect tense.*

If I had worked.  
thou had worked.  
he had worked.  
we had worked.  
you had worked.  
they had worked.

IMPERATIVE MOOD.

Work!

Work thou!

PARTICIPLES.

*Present participle.*  
Working.

*Past participle.*      *Present perfect (participial form).*  
Worked.                      Having worked.



used to mark a certain uncertainty or contingency which the indicative cannot well mark, and is used not only after *if*, but after *though*, *although*, *lest*, *unless*, *provided that*, and various other expressions indicating uncertainty. The only verb in our whole language which makes a complete change in the subjunctive is the verb *to be*, and that becomes if I *be*, if I *were*. Cobbett follows the conjugation of the French verb in using the verb *let* in the imperative. "Let me work" is not the imperative of the verb *to work*, but the imperative of the verb *to let*; as is the case with everything that follows *let*; let me eat, let me drink, let me be. No English verb needs more than the one word in the imperative, for the subject or pronoun *you* is generally unexpressed, or left understood. It is sometimes used for emphasis or contrast; as, "Work *you*! I shall not work." As to those two great stumbling-blocks of many persons, *shall* and *will*, *should* and *would*, all you have to do here is to notice that, in the future and conditional tenses, *shall* and *should* are GENERALLY used in the first person singular and plural—that is, after *I* and *we*—and that *will* and *would* are GENERALLY used in the other persons.

103. The Verbs *to have* and *to be* are of great use in our language. They are called *auxiliary verbs*. *To let* and *to do* are also called *auxiliaries*, but they are of far less importance than *to have* and *to be*. Before, however, I say more on the subject of these auxiliaries, I must speak of all the Verbs as *regular* or *irregular*, just observing here that the word *auxiliary* means *helper*, or *helping*.

104. Verbs are called *regular* when they have their changes or variations according to a certain *rule* or manner. Thus: "I *walk*, I *walked*; I *work*, I *worked*." But I cannot say, "I *writed*." I must say, "I *wrote*." Now observe that we call *regular Verbs* all those which end their *past time* of the *Indicative* and their *passive participle* in *ed*; and if you now look back at the conjugation of the Verb *to work*, you will find that it is a regular Verb. Indeed this is the case with almost all Verbs. But there are some little *irregularities* even here, and they must be very well attended to, because a want of attention to them leads to very great errors even as to spelling.

105. These little irregularities I shall notice under five separate heads; and if you should forget, at any time, what has been said on the subject, a reference to these will in a moment set you right.—I. The Verb *to work* is *perfectly* regular, for it has *ed* added to it in order to form the *past time*, and also in order to form the *passive participle*. It is the same with the Verbs *to walk*, *to turn*, *to abandon*, and many others. But if the *Infinitive*, that is to say, the primitive or original word, end in *e*, then *d* only is added in the past time and participle, and *st* instead of *est* after *thou*; as in the case of *to move*, which becomes *moved* and *movest*. You have seen, also, in the case of the Verb *to work*, that we add only an *s* to form the third person singular of the present of the Indicative; *he works*. But if the Infinitive end in *h*, *s*, *x*, or *z*, then *es* must be added; as, *to wish*, *he wishes*; *to toss*, *he tosses*; *to box*, *he boxes*; *to buzz*, *he buzzes*.—II. When the Infinitive ends in *y*, and when that *y* has a *consonant immediately before it*, the *y* is changed into *ie*, to form the third person singular of the present of the Indicative; as *to reply*, *he replies*. But (and I beg you to mark it well) if the ending *y* have a *vowel immediately before it*, the Verb follows the general rule in the formation of the third person singular of the present of the Indicative; as *to delay*, *he delays*; and not *he delaies*. It is the same in the second person singular; as, *to reply*, *thou repliest*, *to delay*, *thou delayest*.—III. When the Infinitive ends in *y* with a consonant immediately before it, the past time of the Indicative and the passive participle are formed by using an *i* instead of the *y*; as, *to reply*, *he replied*; *to deny*, *it was denied*. But if the *y* be preceded by a vowel, *ed* is added to the *y* in the usual manner; as, *to delay*, *he delayed*.—IV. The *active participle*, which always ends in *ing*, is in general formed by simply adding the *ing* to the Infinitive; as, *to work*, *working*; *to talk*, *talking*. But if the Infinitive end in a single *e*, the *e* is

dropped; as, *to move, moving*. The Verb *to be* is an exception to this; but then that is an *irregular* Verb. It is

Say silent *e*, and the rule will hold good throughout. The *e* is not silent in *be*, and is therefore not dropped in *being*. It is never retained, even where one part of speech is converted into another, except where the omission of it might cause a doubtful pronunciation; as, *peace, peaceable; change, changeable*.

when the Infinitive ends in a *single e*, mind; for if the *e* be double, the general rule is followed; as, *to free, freeing*. When the infinitive ends in *ie*, those letters are changed into *y* in the forming of the active participle; as, *to lie, lying*.—V. When the Infinitive ends in a *single consonant*, which has a *single vowel immediately before it*, the final consonant is doubled, not only in forming the active participle, but also in forming the past time of the Indicative, and the passive participle; as, *to rap, rapping; I rapped, it was rapped*. But, observe well, this rule holds good only as to words of *one syllable*; for if the Infinitive of the Verb have more than one syllable, the consonant is not doubled *unless the accent be on the last syllable*; and the accent means the main force, weight, or sound of the voice in pronouncing the word. For instance, in the word *to open*, the accent is on the *first* syllable; and therefore we write, *opening, opened*. But when we come to the Verb *to refer*, where we find the accent on the last syllable, we write, *referring, referred*.

It is, perhaps, worth while noticing that these are principles that apply not only to the verbs, but to various other parts of speech; in fact, principles that run through the whole language. Just as, with nouns, the word ending in *y* preceded by a consonant changes the *y* into *ie* (*lady, ladies*), but does not change the *y* if preceded by a vowel (*valley, valleys*); so with verbs, I carry, he carries; I obey, he obeys; so with adjectives, happy, happier; gay, gayer. And as we have seen that adjectives of one syllable, ending in a consonant preceded by a single vowel double the consonant in the comparative and superlative degrees (*hot, hotter, hottest*), but do not do so if preceded by a double vowel or by none at all (*neat, neater; rich, richer*), so it is with verbs, of similar ending, in the

past tense and in the participles, rap, rapped, rapping; cheat, cheated, cheating; work, worked, working. It is something that is demanded by the pronunciation of the words; for if we did not double the final consonant in words of this kind, we should have to say *hō'ter* instead of *hot'ter*, *rā'ping* instead of *rap'ping*. And this reminds me to say that it is of the utmost importance for you to study and understand the marking and accentuation of words in the dictionary; for if you wish to pronounce the English language correctly, you will find it necessary to consult the dictionary very frequently. The most learned Englishman or American that lives, or has ever lived—not excepting Doctor Johnson or Noah Webster himself—is, or has been, constantly obliged to consult the dictionary for the correct pronunciation of English words.

How different, in this respect, is the German language! In that language there is but one single word irregularly pronounced; le-ben'-dig, instead of le'-ben-dig, like le'ben. And as to the meaning, every German word explains itself; so that no German boy or man need ever look into a dictionary to find out the meaning or the pronunciation of a word in his language. Every word in that language is spelled, too, as it is pronounced. But the grammatical construction of that language is far more difficult than ours. Mr. White confesses that, in order to learn German, the *grammar* of the language must be studied. I will go so far as to say, that an Englishman or American who studies the grammar of that language thoroughly well, will never need much further study of the grammar of his mother-tongue.

106. These irregularities, though very necessary to be attended to, do not prevent us from considering the Verbs which are subject to them as *regular Verbs*. The mark of a regular Verb is that its *past time* and *passive participle* end in *ed*; every Verb which does not answer to this mark is *irregular*.

107. There are many of these *irregular Verbs*, of which I shall here insert a complete list. All the irregularities (except the little irregularities just mentioned) which it is possible to find in an English Verb (the *auxiliary Verbs* excepted) are in the *past time* and the *passive participle* only. Therefore, it will be sufficient to give a list, showing, in those two instances, what are the irregularities of each Verb; and, in order to render this list

convenient, and to shorten the work of referring to it, I shall make it alphabetical. With the past time and the passive participle of the several Verbs I shall use the first person singular of the pronoun, in order to make my examples as clear as possible.

### LIST OF IRREGULAR VERBS.

INFINITIVE.	PAST TIME.	PARTICIPLES.
to abide,	I abode,	I have abode.
to be,	I was,	“ been.
to bear,	I bore,	“ borne.
to beat,	I beat,	“ beaten.
to become,	I became,	“ become.
to befall,	it befell,	it has befallen.
to beget,	I begot,	I have begotten.
to begin,	I began,	“ begun.
to behold,	I beheld,	“ beheld.
to bend,	I bended,	“ bent.
to beseech,	I besought,	“ besought.
to bid,	I bade,	“ bidden.
to bind,	I bound,	“ bound.
to bite,	I bit,	“ bitten.
to bleed,	I bled,	“ bled.
to break,	I broke,	“ broken.
to breed,	I bred,	“ bred.
to bring,	I brought,	“ brought.
to buy,	I bought,	“ bought.
to catch,	I caught,	“ caught.
to choose,	I chose,	“ chosen.
to cleave.	I clove,	“ cloven.
to come,	I came,	“ come.
to cost,	I cost,	“ cost.
to cut,	I cut,	“ cut.
to die,	I died,	“ died.
to do,	I did,	“ done.
to drink,	I drank,	“ drunk.

**INFINITIVE.**

to drive,  
to eat,  
to fall,  
to feed,  
to feel,  
to fight,  
to find,  
to flee,  
to fling,  
to fly,  
to forbear,  
to forbid,  
to forget,  
to forgive,  
to forsake,  
to get,  
to give,  
to go,  
to grind,  
to have,  
to hear,  
to hide,  
to hit,  
to hold,  
to hurt,  
to keep,  
to know,  
to lay,  
to lead,  
to leave,  
to lend,  
to let,  
to lie,  
to lose,  
to make,

**PAST TIME.**

I drove,  
I ate,  
I fell,  
I fed,  
I felt,  
I fought,  
I found,  
I fled,  
I flung,  
I flew,  
I forbore,  
I forbade,  
I forgot,  
I forgave,  
I forsook,  
I got,  
I gave,  
I went,  
I ground,  
I had,  
I heard,  
I hid,  
I hit,  
I held,  
I hurt,  
I kept,  
I knew,  
I laid,  
I led,  
I left,  
I lent,  
I let,  
I lay,  
I lost,  
I made,

**PARTICIPLES.**

I have driven.  
“ eaten.  
“ fallen.  
“ fed.  
“ felt.  
“ fought.  
“ found.  
“ fled.  
“ flung.  
“ flown.  
“ forborne.  
“ forbidden.  
“ forgotten.  
“ forgiven.  
“ forsaken.  
“ gotten.  
“ given.  
“ gone.  
“ ground.  
“ had.  
“ heard.  
“ hidden.  
“ hit.  
“ held.  
“ hurt.  
“ kept.  
“ known.  
“ laid.  
“ led.  
“ left.  
“ lent.  
“ let.  
“ lain.  
“ lost.  
“ made.

## INFINITIVE.

to meet,  
to overcome,  
to overdo,  
to pay,  
to put,  
to read,  
to rend,  
to ride,  
to ring,  
to rise,  
to run,  
to say,  
to see,  
to seek,  
to sell,  
to send,  
to set,  
to shake,  
to shear,  
to shed,  
to show,  
to shrink,  
to shoe,  
to shoot,  
to shut,  
to sing,  
to sink,  
to sit,  
to slay,  
to sleep,  
to slide,  
to slit,  
to smite,  
to speak,  
to speed,

## PAST TIME.

I met,  
I overcame,  
I overdid,  
I paid,  
I put,  
I read,  
I rent,  
I rode,  
I rang,  
I rose,  
I ran,  
I said,  
I saw,  
I sought,  
I sold,  
I sent,  
I set,  
I shook,  
I sheared,  
I shed,  
I showed,  
I shrank,  
I shod,  
I shot,  
I shut,  
I sang,  
I sank,  
I sat,  
I slew,  
I slept,  
I slid,  
I slit,  
I smote,  
I spoke,  
I sped,

## PARTICIPLES.

I have met.  
“ overcome.  
“ overdone.  
“ paid.  
“ put.  
“ read.  
“ rent.  
“ ridden.  
“ rung.  
“ risen.  
“ run.  
“ said.  
“ seen.  
“ sought:  
“ sold.  
“ sent.  
“ set.  
“ shaken.  
“ shorn.  
“ shed.  
“ shown.  
“ shrunk.  
“ shod.  
“ shot.  
“ shut.  
“ sung.  
“ sunk.  
“ sat.  
“ slain.  
“ slept.  
“ slidden.  
“ slit.  
“ smitten.  
“ spoken.  
“ sped.

INFINITIVE.	PAST TIME.	PARTICIPLES.
to spend,	I spent,	I have spent.
to spin,	I span,	“ spun.
to spit,	I spat,	“ spat.
to spread,	I spread,	“ spread.
to stand,	I stood,	“ stood.
to steal,	I stole,	“ stolen.
to stick,	I stuck,	“ stuck.
to stink,	I stunk,	“ stunk.
to strike,	I struck,	“ stricken.
to swear,	I swore,	“ sworn.
to take,	I took,	“ taken.
to teach,	I taught,	“ taught.
to tear,	I tore,	“ torn.
to tell,	I told,	“ told.
to think,	I thought,	“ thought.
to tread,	I trod,	“ trodden.
to understand,	I understood,	“ understood.
to wear,	I wore,	“ worn.
to win,	I won,	“ won.
to wind,	I wound,	“ wound.
to write,	I wrote,	“ written.

108. It is usual with grammarians to insert several Verbs in their *List of Irregulars* which I have *not* inserted here. But I have, in the above list, placed every Verb in our language which is really irregular. However, I will here subjoin a list of those Verbs which are, by some grammarians, reckoned irregular ; and then I will show you, not only that they are not irregular, strictly speaking, but that you ought by all means to use them in a regular form.



LIST OF VERBS WHICH, BY SOME PERSONS, ARE ERRONEOUSLY  
DEEMED IRREGULARS.

INFINITIVE.	PAST TIME.	PARTICIPLES.
to awake,	I awoke,	I have awaked.
to bereave,	I bereft,	“ bereft.
to blow,	I blew,	“ blown.
to build,	I built,	“ built.
to burn,	I burnt,	“ burnt.
to burst,	I burst,	“ burst.
to cast,	I cast,	“ cast.
to chide,	I chid,	“ chidden.
to cling,	I clung,	“ clung.
to creep,	I crept,	“ crept.
to crow,	I crew,	“ crowed.
to curse,	I curst,	“ curst.
to dare,	I dared,	“ dared.
to deal,	I dealt,	“ dealt.
to dig,	I dug,	“ dug.
to dip,	I dipt,	“ dipt.
to draw,	I drew,	“ drawn.
to dream,	I dreamt,	“ dreamt.
to dwell,	I dwelt,	“ dwelt.
to freeze,	I froze,	“ frozen.
to geld,	I gelt,	“ gelt.
to gild,	I gilt,	“ gilt.
to gird,	I girt,	“ girt.
to grow,	I grew,	“ grown.
to hang,	I hung,	“ hung.
to help,	I helpt,	“ helpt.
to hew,	I hewed,	“ hewn.
to kneel,	I knelt,	“ knelt.
to knit,	I knit,	“ knit.
to lade,	I laded,	“ laden.
to leap,	I leaped,	“ leapt.
to light,	I lit,	“ lighted.

INFINITIVE.

to load,  
to mean,  
to mow,  
to overflow,  
to saw,  
to shave,  
to shred,  
to shine,  
to sling,  
to slink,  
to slip,  
to smell,  
to snow,  
to sow,  
to spell,  
to spill,  
to split,  
to spring,  
to stamp,  
to sting,  
to strew,  
to strow,  
to stride,  
to string,  
to strip,  
to strive,  
to sweep,  
to swell,  
to swim,  
to swing,  
to thrive,  
to throw,  
to thrust,  
to wax,  
to weave,

PAST TIME.

I loaded,  
I meant,  
I mowed,  
I overflowed,  
I sawed,  
I shaved,  
I shred,  
I shone,  
I slung,  
I slunk,  
I slipt,  
I smelt,  
it snowed,  
I sowed,  
I spelt,  
I spilt,  
I split,  
I sprang,  
I stampd,  
I stung,  
I strewed,  
I strowed,  
I strode,  
I strung,  
I stript,  
I strove,  
I swept,  
I swelled,  
I swam,  
I swung,  
I throve,  
I threw,  
I thrust,  
I waxed,  
I wove,

PARTICIPLES.

I have loaden or laden.  
I have meant.  
“ mown.  
“ overflown.  
“ sawn.  
“ shaven.  
“ shred.  
“ shone.  
“ slung.  
“ slunk.  
“ slipt.  
“ smelt.  
it has snown.  
I have sown.  
“ spelt.  
“ spilt.  
“ split.  
“ sprung.  
“ stampd.  
“ stung.  
“ strewn.  
“ strown.  
“ stridden.  
“ strung.  
“ stript.  
“ striven.  
“ swept.  
“ swollen.  
“ swum.  
“ swung.  
“ thriven.  
“ thrown.  
“ thrust.  
“ waxen.  
“ woven.

INFINITIVE.	PAST TIME.	PARTICIPLES.
to weep,	I wept,	I have wept.
to whip,	I whipt,	“ whipt.

109. The greater part of these verbs have become irregular by the bad practice of *abbreviating* or *shortening* in writing. We are always given to cut our words short; and, with very few exceptions, you find people writing *lov'd*, *mov'd*, *walk'd*; instead of *loved*, *moved*, *walked*. They wish to make the *pen* correspond with the *tongue*; but they ought not then to write the word *the* at full length, nor the word *of*, nor any other little word; for scarcely ever are these words *fully sounded* in speaking. From *lov'd*, *mov'd*, *walk'd*, it is very easy to slide into *lovt*, *movt*, *walkt*. And this has been the case with regard to *curst*, *dealt*, *dwelt*, *leapt*, *helpt*, and many others in the last inserted list. It is just as proper to say *jumpt*, as it is to say *leapt*; and just as proper to say *walkt* as either; and thus we might go on, till the orthography of the whole language were changed. When the love of contraction came to operate on such Verbs as *to burst* and *to light*, it found such a clump of consonants already at the end of the words that it could add none. It could not enable the organs even of English speech to pronounce *burst'd*, *light'd*. It therefore made really short work of it, and, dropping the last syllable altogether, wrote *burst* and *light* in the past time and passive participle. But is it not more harmonious, as well as more correct, to say, “the bubble is almost *burst*ed,” than it is to say, “The bubble is almost *burst*?” And as to *hang*, is it not better to say *hanged* than *hung*? “I will be *hanged* if I do,” is a very common phrase, and is it not better than it would be to say, “I will be *hung* if I do?” Many of these Verbs, by being very difficult to contract, have, as in the case of *to hang*, *to swing*, and the like, reduced the shorteners to the necessity of changing almost all the letters of the

words; as, to *dare*, *durst*; but is it not better to say I *dared* than I *durst*? This habit of contracting or shortening is a very mischievous habit. It leads to the destruction of all propriety in the use of letters; and instead of *a saving of time*, it produces, by the puzzling that it gives rise to, a great *loss of time*. Hoping that what I have here said will be a warning to you against the cutting of words short, I have only to add, on the subject of *irregular verbs*, that those in the last list are to be used in the regular form, and that the only real irregulars are those of the first list. Nay, I have, after all, left some Verbs in the first list which *may* be used in the regular form; as, *past*, which may be, in the participle, *passed*, and with full as much propriety.

The fact that this second series of verbs, which Cobbett declares ought to be used in the regular form, are now almost all used in *that* form, is a pretty good proof of the soundness of his judgment. There is a strong tendency now-a-days to make irregular verbs regular, as well as to make irregularly-pronounced words regular. Mr. White is singular in his notions on this subject. He dislikes all departures from old-established pronunciations; calls them “book-talk, not free, manly speech.” Though the people of the town of Derby, for instance, pronounce the name of their town just as it is spelled, he thinks the aristocratic pronunciation “Darby” is the proper one, because it has support in other words pronounced in the old style, such as *clark* for *clerk*, *clargy* for *clergy*, *sarjeant* for *serjeant*. And yet he seems to agree with Walker that *vurgin* and *vurtue* instead of *virgin* and *virtue* have “a grossness approaching to vulgarity!” Is not the one just as bad as the other? nay, worse; for the *i* in these words, like that in *thirst* and *girl*, has, in everybody’s mouth, something of the sound of the *u*. Ought we, in order to satisfy a peculiarity or nicety of taste, to retain an irregular pronunciation in particular words, which gives endless trouble to thousands of teachers and millions of children? I am all the more surprised at this peculiar notion of Mr. White’s, as he seems willing to abolish every change in the ending of words in order to simplify the grammar: even the *m* in *whom* he is willing to discard. There is no use in talking about it; it is quite natural that a practical, progressive, reading people like the Americans should pronounce words as they are spelled. We no longer hear housewife pro-

nounced *huzzif*, as in England; or, haunt pronounced *hant*. Nor do I think there is any loss whatever, but a gain, in so pronouncing. "Derby" sounds just as good as "Darby;" "clerk" as good as "clark;" "Berkeley" as "Barkeley."

Simplicity is, in fact, the order of the day; it is the tendency of the age in all things; for modern progress, modern ideas, are rendering all mankind more neighborly, more brotherly, more nearly akin to each other. Mr. White is inclined to think that those we call irregular verbs are the real strong ones, and the others the weak. I notice that my little girl, five years old, frequently makes irregular verbs regular (I dranked, I eated, etc.), although she never hears them so used. This to me is a proof that there is a natural tendency in the language to regularity of construction. And indeed there is a reason for this change, as for all changes, in our language—a satisfactory, a compensatory reason; for most of the old irregular forms are needed for other and different service: they are wanted for qualificative and figurative use. Let us take some of these very verbs in the second list—to burn, to chide, to gild, to gird, to hew, to load, to shave, to spill, to weave—and we shall see that though used in the regular form as verbs, the IRREGULAR FORM IS USED AS ADJECTIVES. I burned the cork; here is burnt cork;—he chided the children; there they go, like a chidden train;—she gilded the faces of the sleepers; she wears gilt lace;—he girded himself for the combat; here is a sea-girt isle;—he hewed the stone; here is a temple built of hewn stone; and so on. Though we speak of having worked hard, of having melted the ice, and of having swelled the tide of prosperity, yet we speak of wrought iron, of a swollen flood, and of molten lead. Though we say that "she knitted the stockings" and "he freighted the vessel," we say that "her brows were knit" and "the enterprise was fraught with misfortune." Thus we see that the irregular form of the verb has been turned into an adjective, and the regular form retained as a verb.

The old form is also needed to form nouns as well as adjectives. "During the *past* year, he has often *passed* me without a glance; but, never mind; the *past* is forgotten." And the old form is sometimes used to show a difference of meaning as compared with the regular form; for "he *durst* not do it" is quite a different thing from "he dared not do it;" the former indicating that he had not the permission to do it, and the latter that he had not the courage.—Having forgotten what Cobbett said above of the verb, *to pass*, I struck it out of the list of irregulars, as it is never now

used irregularly. Otherwise I should have let it stand. It is, however, the only verb I did strike out.

110. AUXILIARY VERBS.—In the present Letter, paragraph 103, I opened this part of my subject. The word *let* is the past time and the passive participle of the Verb *to let*. It is used as an auxiliary, however, in the *present time*; and only in the *imperative mode*; as, *Let me go; let us go; let him go*. That is to say, *Leave me to go, leave us to go, leave him to go*. Perhaps the meaning, *fully* expressed, would be, Act in such a way that I may be left to go, or suffered to go.

The peculiarity of this verb *to let* is, that like a dozen other irregular verbs, it may be used in all the tenses without undergoing any change of form; as, I *let* him come now; I *let* him come yesterday; I *have let* him come. I *put* it away now; I *put* it away yesterday; I *have put* it away. So with *cut, cast, hit*, and others.

111. The auxiliary *do*, which, for the past time, becomes *did*, is part of the Verb *to do*, which in its past time is *did*, and in its passive participle *done*. In this sense, it is not an *auxiliary*, but a *principal* Verb, and its meaning is equal to that of *to execute*, or *to perform*; as, I *do my work*, I *execute my work*, I *perform my work*. As an auxiliary or *helper*, it seems to denote the *time* of the principal Verb; as, I *do* walk; I *did* walk; and, we may say, I *do execute my work*, or, I *do do my work*. In this last example, the first *do* is an auxiliary, and the last *do* a principal Verb. However, as I said before, *do* and *did*, used as auxiliaries, do a great deal more than merely express *time*. In fact, they are not often used for that purpose only. They are used for the purpose of affirming or denying in a manner peculiarly strong; as, I *do* work, means, that I work, notwithstanding all that may be, or may have been said, or thought, to the contrary; or it means, that I work *now*, and have not done it at some other stated or supposed time. It is the same, with the exception of time, as to the use of *did*. These are

amongst those little words of vast import, the proper force and use of which foreigners scarcely ever learn, and which we learn from our very infancy.

This is, I think, the proper place to state that the English verb has, in fact, *five* forms in the *present* tense—something which, I believe, is not found in the verbs of any other modern tongue:

He works, common form.

He is working, progressive form.

He does work, emphatic form.

He worketh, solemn form.

He doth work, solemn emphatic form.

All these forms convey a different shade of meaning, and are used under different circumstances, which will be explained by-and-by. I will only say here that the first three are the most frequently used. The French and the Germans have only one form for the whole five: *il travaille*, *er arbeitet*. They have, it is true, the progressive form, too, but it is seldom used by the French and hardly ever by the Germans.

Now, concerning *do*, you must notice that, as an auxiliary, it is used chiefly in NEGATIVE and INTERROGATIVE sentences:

He works, he is working, *affirmative*.

He *does* not work, *negative*.

*Does* he work? *interrogative*.

It is never used in affirmative sentences except for emphasis. The French and the Germans, for the last two forms, simply say: He works not, Works he? We use this form when we speak solemnly or earnestly: He works not; He comes not; I see him not. Notice that when any other auxiliary is used (have, be, must, may, etc.), we cannot use *do* in either negative or interrogative sentences: "I have not seen him. He must not go. Am I your friend? May I speak?" To say, therefore, "I did not have a penny," is not so good as, "I had not a penny."

112. The Verbs *to have* and *to be* are the two great auxiliaries. These words demand an extraordinary portion of your attention. They are *principal* Verbs as well as auxiliaries. The Verb *to have*, as a principal Verb, signifies *possession*; as, *I have a pen*, that is to say, *I possess a pen*. Then, this is a word of very great use indeed in its capacity of principal Verb; for we say, *I have a headache*, *I have a hatred* of such a thing, *I have a*

*mind to go* ; and hundreds of similar phrases. I *possess* a headache has the same *meaning* ; but the other is more agreeable to the natural turn of our language. As *auxiliary*, this Verb is absolutely necessary in forming what are called the *compound times* of other Verbs, and those times are called *compound* because they are formed of *two* or *more Verbs*. Suppose the subject to be of *my working*, and that I want to tell you that my work is *ended*, that I have *closed* my work, I cannot, in a short manner, tell you this without the *help* of the Verb *to have*. To say, *I work*, or *I worked*, or *I will work* ; these will not answer my purpose. No : I must call in the *help* of the Verb *to have*, and tell you I *have* worked. So, in the case of the past time, I must say, I *had* worked ; in the future, I *shall have* worked ; in the subjunctive mode, I must say, I may, might, could, or should *have* worked. If you reflect a little, you will find a *clear reason* for employing the Verb *to have* in this way ; for when I say, “*I have worked*,” my words amount to this : that the *act of working* is now in *my possession*. It is *completed*. It is a thing *I own*, and therefore I say, *I have* it.

113. The Verb *to be* signifies *existence*, when used as a principal Verb. “*To be ill, to be well, to be rich, to be poor*,” mean to *exist* in illness, in health, in riches, in poverty. This Verb, in its *compound times*, requires the *help* of the Verb *to have* ; as, I *have been*, I *had been*, I *shall have been*, and so on. As *auxiliary*, this Verb is used with the *participles* of other Verbs ; as, *to be working*, he *is* working, it *is* worked. Now you will perceive, if you reflect, that these phrases mean as follows : *existing in work, he exists in work, it exists in a worked state*. Both these Verbs are sometimes used, at one and the same time, as auxiliaries to other principal Verbs ; as, *I have been writing* ; *I have been imprisoned* ; and so on ; and, upon patient attention to what has already been said, you will find that they retain upon all occasions their full



meaning, of *possession* in the one case, and of *existence* in the other.

114. Now, my dear James, if I have succeeded in making clear to you the *principle* out of which the use of these words, as auxiliaries, has arisen, I have accomplished a great deal; for, if well grounded in that *principle*, all the subsequent difficulties will speedily vanish before you.

115. I now proceed to close this long and important Letter, by presenting to you the conjugation of these two Verbs, both of which are *irregular*, and every irregularity is worthy of your strict attention.

### INFINITIVE MODE.

To HAVE.

### INDICATIVE MODE.

	<i>Singular.</i>	<i>Plural.</i>
Present Time.	1st Person. I have,	We have.
	2d Person. Thou hast,	You have.
	3d Person. He, she, or it has	They have.
Past Time.	{ — I had,	We had.
	— Thou hadst,	You had.
	{ — He, she or it had,	They had.
Future Time.	{ — I shall, or will have,	We shall, or will have.
	— Thou shalt, or wilt have,	You shall, or will have.
	{ — He, she, or it shall or will have],	They shall, or will have.

### SUBJUNCTIVE MODE.

Present Time.	{ If I have, or may, might, could, or should have.	
	If thou have, or may “ “ “ have.	
	If he, she, or it have, or may “ “ have.	
	If we have, or may “ “ have:	
	If you have, or may “ “ have.	
	If they have, or may “ “ have.	

### IMPERATIVE MODE.

Let me have,	Let us have.
Have thou,	Have you.
Let him, her, or it have,	Let them have.

## PARTICIPLES.

*Active.*—Having.*Passive.*—Had.

116. Though I have inserted *hath* in the third person singular of the present of the indicative, it is hardly ever used. It is out of date, and ought to be wholly laid aside.

117. The Verb *to be* is still more irregular, but a little attention to its irregularities will prevent all errors in the use of it.

## INFINITIVE MODE.

To BE.

## INDICATIVE MODE.

	<i>Singular.</i>	<i>Plural.</i>
Present Time.	{ 1st Person. I am,	We are.
	{ 2d Person. Thou art,	You are.
	{ 3d Person. He, she, or it is,	They are.
Past Time.	{ — I was,	We were.
	{ — Thou wast,	You were.
	{ — He, she, or it was,	They were.
Future Time.	{ — I shall, or will be,	We shall, or will be.
	{ — Thou shalt, or wilt be,	You shall, or will be.
	{ — He, she, or it shall, or will be,	They shall, or will be.

## SUBJUNCTIVE MODE.

Present Time.	{ If I be, or may, might, would, could, or should be.	
	{ If thou be, or may “ “ “ “ be.	
	{ If he, she, or it be, or may “ “ be.	
	{ If we be, or may “ “ be.	
	{ If you be, or may “ “ be.	
	{ If they be, or may “ “ be.	

Past Time.	{ If I were.
	{ If thou were.
	{ If he, she, or it were.
	{ If we were.
	{ If you were.
	{ If they were.

## IMPERATIVE MODE.

Let me be,

Be thou,

Let him, her, or it, be,

Let us be.

Be you.

Let them be.

## PARTICIPLES.

*Present.*—Being.*Past.*—Been.

118. In the Subjunctive Mode I have made use of the conjunction *if* throughout all the conjugations of Verbs. But a Verb may be in that mode without an *if* before it. The *if* is only *one* of the marks of that mode. A Verb is always in that mode when the *action or state of being* expressed by the Verb is expressed *conditionally*, or when the action or state of being is, in some way or other, *dependent* on some other action or state of being. But of this I shall speak more at large when I come to the *Syntax* of Verbs.

119. There remain a few words to be said about the *signs*, the *defective Verbs*, and the *impersonal Verbs*. The signs, *may*, *might*, *can*, *could*, *will*, *would*, *shall*, *should*, and *must*, have all, originally, been Verbs, though they are now become defective in almost all their parts, and serve only as signs to other Verbs. *Will*, indeed, is part of a regular Verb; as, *to will*, they *willed*, they are *willing*, they *will be willing*. The word *would* is certainly the past time and passive participle of the same Verb; and, indeed, it is used as a principal Verb now, in certain cases; as, “*I would he were rich.*” That is to say, I *desire*, or am *willing*, or, it is *my will*, that he *should be* rich. But deep inquiries regarding the origin of these words are more curious than useful. A mere idea of the nature of their origin is enough. The Verb *ought* is a Verb defective, in most of its parts. It certainly, however, is no other than a part of the Verb *to owe*, and is become *ought* by corruption. For instance; “*I ought to write to you,*”

means that "I owe the performance of the act of writing to you." *Ought* is made use of only in the *present time*, and for that reason a great deal has been lost to our language by this corruption. As to the Verbs which some grammarians have called *impersonal*, there are, in fact, no such things in the English language. By *impersonal Verb* is meant a Verb that has no *noun* or *pronoun* for its nominative case; no person or thing that is the actor, or receiver of an action, or that is in being. Thus: "it rains," is by some called an *impersonal Verb*; but the pronoun *it* represents the person. Look again at Letter VI, and at paragraphs 60 and 61. You will there find what it is that this *it*, in such cases, represents.

120. Thus I have concluded my Letter on the Etymology of Verbs, which is by far the most important part of the subject. Great as have been my endeavors to make the matter clear to you, I am aware, that, after the *first reading* of this Letter, your mind will be greatly confused. You will have had a glimpse at everything in the Letter, but will have seen nothing clearly. But, my dear James, lay the book aside for a day or two; then read the whole Letter again and again. Read it early, while your mind is clear, and while sluggards are snoring. Write it down. Lay it aside for another day or two. Copy your own writing. *Think* as you proceed; and, at the end of your copying, you will understand clearly all the contents of the Letter. Do not attempt to study the Letter *piece by piece*. In your readings, as well as in your copyings, go clean throughout. If you follow these instructions, the remaining part of your task will be very easy and pleasant.

As to this last piece of advice, I cannot agree with Cobbett. Reading the whole letter at once is the very way to get a confused impression of the whole subject; just as going through a whole museum at once leaves a confused impression of everything and a distinct impression of nothing. No; go through one roomful of

curiosities at one visit; master the whole collection step by step; and when you have got it pretty clear in your mind, then you may go over it all at one run.

To complete this, the most important part of etymology, I must give you a full view of a passive verb, or rather of a verb in the passive voice. Just devote one little half-hour to it in the early morning, when your mind is fresh; and you will see its nature clearly; compare it with the same verb in the active voice, and you will get a fair idea of what a verb in the passive voice is. For, to make the matter all the more plain, I see no reason why this same verb *to work*, which I have given you in the active voice, should not be given in the passive, too; for we often say, He *is worked* to death; the mine *was well worked*; the problem *has been worked* out, and so on. Besides—and this is a secret which every school-boy does not know—there must, in the conjugation of every passive verb, be displayed a complete conjugation of the verb *to be*; so here we kill two birds with one stone.

*Complete Conjugation of the Passive Verb To be worked:*

INFINITIVE MOOD.

SIMPLE TENSES.

*Present tense.*

To be worked.

COMPOUND TENSES.

*Present perfect tense.*

To have been worked.

INDICATIVE MOOD.

*Present tense.*

I am worked,  
Thou art worked,  
He is "  
We are "  
You are "  
They are "

*Present perfect tense.*

I have been worked.  
Thou hast been worked.  
He has been "  
We have been "  
You have been "  
They have been "

*Past tense.*

I was worked,  
Thou wast worked,  
He was "  
We were "  
You were "  
They were "

*Past perfect tense.*

I had been worked.  
Thou hadst been worked.  
He had been "  
We had been "  
You had been "  
They had been "

*Simple future tense.*

I shall be worked,  
Thou wilt be worked,  
He will be "  
We shall be "  
You will be "  
They will be "

*Perfect future tense.*

I shall have been worked.  
Thou wilt have been worked.  
He will have been "  
We shall have been "  
You will have been "  
They will have been "

*Present conditional form.*

I should be worked,  
Thou wouldst be worked,  
He would be "  
We should be "  
You would be "  
They would be "

*Perfect conditional form.*

I should have been worked.  
Thou wouldst have been worked.  
He would have been "  
We should have been "  
You would have been "  
They would have been "

POTENTIAL MOOD.

*Present tense.*  
 I may be worked,  
 Thou mayst be worked,  
 He may be "  
 We may be "  
 You may be "  
 They may be "

*Past tense.*  
 I might be worked,  
 Thou mightst be worked,  
 He might be "  
 We might be "  
 You might be "  
 They might be "

*Present perfect tense.*  
 I may have been worked.  
 Thou mayst have been worked.  
 He may have been "  
 We may have been "  
 You may have been "  
 They may have been "

*Past perfect tense.*  
 I might have been worked.  
 Thou mightst have been worked.  
 He might have been "  
 We might have been "  
 You might have been "  
 They might have been "

SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD.

*Present tense.*  
 If I be worked,  
 thou be worked,  
 he be "  
 we be "  
 you be "  
 they be "

*Past tense.*  
 If I were worked,  
 thou were worked,  
 he were "  
 we were "  
 you were "  
 they were "

*Present perfect tense.*  
 If I have been worked.  
 thou have been worked.  
 he have been "  
 we have been "  
 you have been "  
 they have been "

*Past perfect tense.*  
 If I had been worked.  
 thou had been "  
 he had been "  
 we had been "  
 you had been "  
 they had been "

IMPERATIVE MOOD.

Be worked, or, Be thou worked.

PARTICIPLES.

*Present*—Being worked,

*Past*—Having been worked.

LETTER IX.

ETYMOLOGY OF ADVERBS.

121. In Letter III, and in paragraphs 27 and 28, you will find a description of this Part of Speech. Read again those two paragraphs, in order to refresh your memory. There is not much to be said about Adverbs under the head of Etymology. They are words liable to few variations. Adverbs are very numerous, and may be divided into five principal classes: that is to say, Adverbs of *time*, of *place*, of *order*, of *quality*, and of *manner*.

This last class, which is the most numerous, is composed of those which are derived immediately from adjectives, and which end in *ly*; as, *especially, particularly, thankfully*.

122. These Adverbs, ending in *ly*, are, for the most part, formed by simply adding *ly* to the adjective; as, *especial* becomes *especially*; but if the adjective end in *y*, that *y* is changed into *i* in forming the Adverb; as, *happy, happily; steady, steadily*. If the adjective end in *le*, the *e* is dropped in forming the Adverb; as, *possible, possibly*.

123. Some few Adverbs have *degrees of comparison*; as, *often, oftener, oftenest*; and those which are derived from irregular adjectives are irregular in forming their degrees of comparison; as, *well, better, best*.

124. Some Adverbs are *simple* or *single*; others *compound*. The former consist of *one word*, the latter of *two or more words*; as, *happily; at present; now-a-days*; which last means *at the days that now are*. Another Adverb of this description is, *by-and-by*; which is used to express, *in a short time*; and literally it means *near and near*; because *by* itself, as an Adverb, means *near, close, beside*. When Adverbs are compound, the words composing them ought to be connected by a *hyphen*, or *hyphens*, as in the above examples of *now-a-days* and *by-and-by*.

I must here explain to you two important things, of which Cobbett makes no mention: the **PHRASE** and the **CLAUSE**. In the sentence, "I shall return *immediately*," the word *immediately* is simply an adverb of time, modifying the verb *shall return*; but when I change the adverb into several words, as, "I shall return *in an instant*," it becomes a **PHRASE**, an *adverbial phrase*. Phrases are used to express all that adverbs are used to express, and nearly all adverbs can be turned into adverbial phrases. The adverb *now* may be changed into *at this moment* or *at present*; *beautifully* may be rendered by *in a beautiful manner*; *here* may be turned into *at this place*; *in a quiet way* may be rendered by *quietly*; and so on. And here I must show you that there are many cases where we

prefer the *adverbial phrase* to the *adverb*. To what part of speech do you think the words *silly, kindly, friendly*, belong? They look like adverbs, do they not? But they are not, as you will find by trial: a silly boy, a kindly gentleman, a friendly lady. Shall I then say, The boy speaks sillily? The gentleman acts kindly? The lady received us friendlily? These expressions are not absolutely incorrect; they are better than with the adjective, The boy speaks silly, etc.; but they do not *sound* agreeable; so we prefer the *adverbial PHRASE*: The boy speaks *in a silly manner*; the gentleman acts *in a kindly manner*; the lady received us *in a friendly manner*, or *in a friendly way*. Observe, too, that you ought never to put a preposition before an adverb of place; as, *to here, from there*. You must use a *phrase*, and say, *to this place, from that city*, etc., always naming the place referred to. Never say *from whence, from thence*; but simply *whence, thence*.

Now for the *CLAUSE*. The difference between the *phrase* and the *clause* is this: the clause always has a subject and predicate (nominative and verb), the phrase never has either. "I shall return *when I please*." Here, instead of the phrase *in an instant*, we have an *assertion*, with subject (I) and predicate (please), which cannot be changed for a single word. This is called an *adverbial CLAUSE*; *adverbial* because it modifies the verb of the first clause; for the sentence now contains two clauses, and is changed from a simple into a complex sentence. Every sentence must have at least *one* clause, while there may not be a single phrase in ten consecutive sentences. A clause may be not only *adverbial*, but *objective, participial, infinitive, or relative*. "He asked *what I was doing*," objective clause; "He came in *as I was going away*," participial clause; "He wants *to see what will come of it*," infinitive clause; "The boy *who learns English* is my son," relative clause; and so on. Observe the following three examples, and you will see how the *adverb* may be turned into an *adverbial phrase*, and the latter into an *adverbial clause*:

Speak *distinctly*.

Speak *in a distinct manner*.

Speak *so that you may be understood*.

It is worth noticing that some adverbs help to *join* clauses as well as to express *time* or *place*, and are therefore called *conjunctive* adverbs: I shall return *when* he returns. I will tell you *where* we are going. Others, again, express negation, affirmation, or cause, and are called adverbs of negation, of affirmation, or of cause; as, (1) *no, not, never*; (2) *yes, yea, truly, certainly*; (3) *why, wherefore*,



*therefore.* *No*, coming immediately before a noun, is, of course, an adjective; as, *No* person under 25 years of age can become a member of Congress. Observe that *all* adverbs ending in *ly* are compared with *more* and *most*, or *less* and *least*; as, handsomely, more handsomely, most handsomely;—handsomely, less handsomely, least handsomely. Do you remember the names of these three degrees?

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## LETTER X.

### ETYMOLOGY OF PREPOSITIONS.

125. Letter III, paragraphs 29 and 30, has taught you of what description of words *Prepositions* are. The chief use of them is to express the different *relations* or *connections* which nouns have with each other, or in which nouns stand with regard to each other; as, John gives money *to* Peter; Peter receives money *from* John. It is useless to attempt to go into curious inquiries as to the *origin* of Prepositions. They never change their endings; they are always written in the same manner. Their *use* is the main thing to be considered; and that will become very clear to you, when you come to the Syntax.

126. There are two *abbreviations*, or *shortenings*, of Prepositions, which I will notice here, because they are in constant use, and may excite doubts in your mind. These are *a* and *o'*; as, I am *a* hunting; he is *a* coming; it is one *o'clock*. The *a* thus added is *at*, without doubt; as, I am *at* hunting; he is *at* coming. Generally this is a vulgar and redundant manner of speaking; but it is *in use*. In mercantile accounts you will frequently see this *a* made use of in a very odd sort of way; as, "Six bales marked 1 *a* 6." The merchant means, "Six bales marked from 1 *to* 6." But this I take to be a relic of the Norman French, which was once the law and mercantile language

of England; for, in French, *a* with an accent, means *to* or *at*. I wonder that merchants, who are generally men of sound sense, do not discontinue the use of this mark of affectation. And, I beg you, my dear James, to bear in mind, that the *only* use of words is *to cause our meaning to be clearly understood*; and that the best words are those which are familiar to the ears of the greatest number of persons. The *o'* with the mark of elision means *of*, or *of the*, or *on*, or *on the*; as, *two o'clock*, which is the same as to say *two of the clock*, or *two according to the clock*, or *two on the clock*.

127. As to the Prepositions which are joined to verbs or other words; as, *to outlive*, *to undervalue*, *to be overdone*, it would be to waste our time to spend it in any statements about them; for these are *other words* than *to live*, *to value*, *to be done*. If we were to go, in this way, into the subject of the *composition* of words, where should we stop? *Thankful*, *thankless*, *without*, *within*; these are all *compound* words, but, of what *use* to us to enter on, and spend our time in, inquiries of mere curiosity? It is for monks and for Fellows of English colleges, who live by the sweat of other people's brows, to spend their time in this manner, and to call the result of their studies *learning*; for you, who will have to earn what you eat and what you drink and what you wear, it is to avoid everything that tends not to real utility.

It may, however, not be quite useless to mention the names given to the parts of derived words. Kind, un-kind, kind-ness. The original word is called the *root*; the syllable placed before the root is called the *prefix*; and the syllable added to the root is called the *suffix*. Although any word having a prefix or a suffix may be called a compound word, we generally call those words compound which are formed by uniting two or more whole words; as, *workshop*, *schoolmaster*, *army-chest*. And as to which compound words take a hyphen, and which do not, this depends a good deal upon the shape of the first and the last letter of the two words united. For instance, *churchyard* needs no hyphen, because

the two parts are sufficiently separated by the ascending *h* and the descending *y*; but *church-bell* or *church-hymn* must be so separated, because the parts of the word would otherwise not be sufficiently distinct.

As to the correct use of prepositions generally, there is no guide equal to the *feeling* for propriety acquired by much reading and speaking, and by frequent hearing of good speakers. Well do I remember that, among my most advanced scholars in Germany, almost the only mistake they finally made was in the use of the prepositions, showing that this was the last difficulty to be mastered. It was sometimes a matter so peculiar, so delicate, so difficult to choose the right preposition, that I was myself obliged to repeat a sentence aloud several times before I could hit on the right word.

Do not forget that the preposition governs the objective case—I send *for* HIM—nor that the same word may sometimes belong to another part of speech: I send *for* him, *for* I cannot do without him. Notice that people are said to be *in* any place, but that they go *into* a place. We are *in* the garden, we are going *into* the house. In the Broadway stages there stands, over the fare-box, this sentence: “Put the exact fare in the box.” It should be *into* the box; for, though the money may be *in* the box, it is put *into* it.—Do not suppose that every preposition must be a *little* word; for *concerning*, *respecting*, *regarding*, *notwithstanding* are also prepositions. Observe, too, that nine *phrases* out of ten begin with a preposition.

In regard to the expressions, *a-hunting*, *a-coming*, and the like, Cobbett does not mean that these are vulgar and redundant,—which is what, at first, I thought he meant,—but that *at hunting*, *at coming*, are so. The other expression is perfectly legitimate, and used by the best authors. You may say, therefore, that something or anything is *a-doing*, *a-making*, *a-building*, *a-ripening*, *a-brewing*, and so on.

## LETTER XI.

## ETYMOLOGY OF CONJUNCTIONS.

128. In Letter III, paragraph 31, you have had a description of this sort of words, and also some account of the *uses* of them. Some of them are called *copulative* Conjunctions, and others *disjunctive*. They all serve to *join together* words, or parts of sentences; but the former express *an union* in the actions, or states of being, expressed by the verb; as, you *and* I talk. The latter a *disunion*; as, you talk, *but* I act. The words of this Part of Speech never vary in their endings. They are always spelled in one and the same way. In themselves they present no difficulty; but, as you will see by-and-by, to use them properly, with other words, in the forming of sentences, demands a due portion of your attention and care.

You see Cobbett says “an union.” Can you tell why this is wrong? If not, look at Letter IV, paragraph 36 (note).

## LETTER XII.

## CAUTIONARY REMARKS.

MY DEAR JAMES:

129. Before we enter on SYNTAX, let me give you a *caution* or two with regard to the contents of the foregoing LETTERS.

130. There are some words which, under different circumstances belong to more than one Part of Speech, as, indeed, you have seen in the *Participles*. But this is by no means confined to that particular description of words.

*I act.* Here *act* is a verb; but “the act performed by me” shows the very same word in the capacity of a noun. The message was sent *by* him; he stood *by* at the time. In the first of these examples *by* is a preposition; in the last an adverb. Mind, therefore, that it is *the sense in which the word is used, and not the letters of which it is composed*, that determines what is the Part of Speech to which it belongs.

131. Never attempt to *get by rote* any part of your instructions. Whoever falls into that practice soon begins to esteem the powers of *memory* more than those of *reason*; and the former are despicable indeed when compared with the latter. When the fond parents of an eighth wonder of the world call him forth into the middle of the parlor to repeat to their visitors some speech of a play, how angry would they be if any one were to tell them that their son’s endowments equalled those of a parrot or a bullfinch! Yet a German bird-teacher would make either of these more perfect in this species of oratory. It is this mode of teaching, which is practised in the great schools, that assists very much in making dunces of lords and country squires. They “*get their lessons*,” that is to say, they repeat the *words* of it; but, as to its *sense* and *meaning*, they seldom have any understanding. This operation is sometimes, for what reason I know not, called getting a thing *by heart*. It must, I should think, mean *by hear’t*; that is to say, *by hear it*. That a person may get and retain and repeat a lesson in this way, without any effort of the mind, is very clear from the fact, of which we have daily proof, that people sing the words and the tune of a song with perfect correctness, at the very time that they are most seriously thinking and debating in their minds about matters of great importance to them.

132. I have cautioned you before against studying the foregoing instructions piecemeal; that is to say, *a little*

*bit* at a time. Read a letter *all through* at once; and, now that you have come to the end of my instructions on Etymology, read all the Letters through at once: do this repeatedly; taking care to proceed slowly and carefully; and, at the end of a few days, all the matters treated of will form a connected whole in your mind.

133. Before you proceed to the Syntax, *try yourself a little*, thus: Copy a short sentence from any book. Then write down the words, one by one, and write against each what Part of Speech *you think* it belongs to. Then look for each word in the dictionary, where you will find the several Parts of Speech denoted by little letters after the word: *s.* is for substantive, or noun; *pro.* for pronoun; *a.* for article; *v. a.* for verb active; *v. n.* for verb neuter; *adj.* for adjective; *adv.* for adverb; *pre.* for preposition; *con.* for conjunction; *int.* for interjection. It will give you great pleasure and encouragement when you find that you are right. If you be sometimes wrong, this will only urge you to renewed exertion. You will be proud to see that, without any one at your elbow, you have really acquired something which you can never lose. You will begin, and with reason, to think yourself learned; your sight, though the objects will still appear a good deal confused, will dart into every part of the science; and you will pant to complete what you will be convinced you have successfully begun.

This is Mr. White's much-ridiculed and thoroughly-despised *parsing* exercise. Of course, carried on as it is at the public-schools, with little or no real understanding of the matter, and with a kind of rapid, mechanical, parrot-like repetition of grammatical terms, it is worse than useless. But I am convinced that, properly considered, and understandingly carried out, this exercise is of positive value. To a boy or girl of proper age, it may be made indeed, tolerably interesting. Let us look at a single little sentence. "Boys love swimming."

*Boys* is a common noun, third person, plural number, masculine gender, nominative case.

*Love* is a regular transitive verb, active voice, third person, plural number, present tense, indicative mood.

*Swimming* is a common (or participial) noun, third person, singular number, objective case.

Now, take each one of these definitions, and ask *why?* and if you can answer properly, then the exercise has become of real and substantial benefit to you. Why a *common* noun? Because it is a *general* name, and not a *particular* one. Why *third* person? Because it is spoken of. Why *plural* number? Because it means more than one. Why *masculine* gender? Because it is the name of males. Why *nominative* case? Because it is the subject of the sentence; and so on. If I had said, "Boys love *to swim*," the object, *to swim*, would be called a verbal noun.

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## LETTER XIII.

### SYNTAX GENERALLY CONSIDERED.

MY DEAR JAMES:

134. In Letter II, paragraph 9, I shortly explained to you the meaning of the word SYNTAX, as that word is used in the teaching of grammar. Read that paragraph again.

135. We are, then, now entering upon this branch of your study; and it is my object to teach you how to give all the words you make use of their proper situation when you come to put them into sentences. Because, though every word that you make use of may be correctly spelled; that is to say, may have all the letters in it that it ought to have, and no more than it ought to have; and though all the words may, at the same time, be the fit words to use in order to express what you wish to express; yet, for want of a due observance of the principles and rules of Syntax, your sentences may be incorrect, and, in some cases, they may not express what you wish them to express.

136. I shall, however, carry my instructions a little

further than the construction of independent sentences. I shall make some remarks upon the manner of *putting sentences together*; and on the things necessary to be understood, in order to enable a person to write a series of sentences. These remarks will show you the use of figurative language, and will, I hope, teach you how to avoid the very common error of making your writing confused and unintelligible.



## LETTER XIV.

### SYNTAX.

#### *The Points and Marks made use of in Writing.*

MY DEAR JAMES:

137. There are, as I informed you in paragraph 9, Letter II, *Points* made use of in the making, or writing, of sentences; and, therefore, we must first notice these; because, as you will soon see, the sense, or meaning, of the words is very much dependent upon the points which are used along with the words. For instance: "*You will be rich if you be industrious, in a few years.*" Then again: "*You will be rich, if you be industrious in a few years.*" Here, though in both sentences the words and also the order of the words are precisely the same, the meaning of one of the sentences is very different from that of the other. The first sentence means that you will, *in a few years' time*, be rich, if you be industrious *now*. The second sentence means that you will be rich, *some time or other*, if you be industrious *in a few years from this time*. And all this great difference in meaning is, as you must see, produced solely by the difference in the situation of the *comma*. Put another comma after the last word *industrious*, and the meaning becomes *dubious*.



A memorable proof of the great importance of attending to *Points* was given to the English nation in the year 1817. A committee of the House of Lords made a report to the House, respecting certain political clubs. A secretary of one of those clubs presented a petition to the House, in which he declared positively, and offered to prove at the bar, that a part of the report was *totally false*. At first their Lordships blustered; their high blood seemed to boil; but, at last, the Chairman of the Committee apologized for the report by saying that there ought to have been a *full-point* where there was only a *comma*! and that it was this which made that false which would otherwise have been, and which was intended to be, true!

138. These Points being, then, things of so much consequence in the forming of sentences, it is necessary that I explain to you the use of them, before I proceed any farther. There are four of them: the *Full-point*, or *Period*; the *Colon*; the *Semi-colon*; the *Comma*.

139. The *Full-point* is a single dot, thus [.], and it is used at the end of every complete sentence. That is to say, at the end of every collection of words which make a full and complete meaning, and is not necessarily connected with other collections of words. But a sentence may consist of several *members* or *divisions*, and then it is called a *compound* sentence. When it has no divisions, it is called a *simple* sentence. Thus: "The people suffer great misery." This is a simple sentence; but, "The people suffer great misery, and daily perish for want," is a compound sentence; that is to say, it is compounded, or made up, of two simple sentences.

140. The *Colon*, which is written thus [:], is next to the full-point in requiring a complete sense in the words. It is, indeed, often used when the sense is complete, but when there is something still behind, which tends to make the sense fuller or clearer.

141. The *Semi-colon* is written thus [;], and it is used to set off, or divide, simple sentences, in cases when the comma is not quite enough to keep the meaning of the simple sentences sufficiently distinct.

142. The *Comma* is written thus [,], and is used to mark the shortest pauses in reading, and the smallest divisions in writing. It has, by some grammarians, been given as a rule to use a comma to set off every part of a compound sentence, which part has in it a *verb* not in the infinitive mode; and, certainly, this is, in general, proper. But it is not always proper; and, besides, commas are used, in numerous cases, to set off parts which have no verbs in them; and even to set off single words which are not verbs; and of this the very sentence which I am now writing gives you ample proof. The comma marks the shortest pause that we make in speaking; and it is evident that, in many cases, its use must depend upon taste. It is sometimes used to give *emphasis*, or *weight*, to the word after which it is put. Observe, now, the following two sentences: "I was very well and cheerful last week; *but*, am rather feeble and low-spirited now." "I am very willing to yield to your kind requests; *but*, I will set your harsh commands at defiance." Commas are made use of when phrases, that is to say, portions of words, are throwed into a sentence, and which are not absolutely necessary to assist in its grammatical construction. For instance: "There were, *in the year 1817*, petitions from a million and a half of men, who, *as they distinctly alleged*, were suffering the greatest possible hardships." The two phrases, in *italics*, may be left out in the reading, and still the sentence will have its full grammatical construction.

Here Cobbett shows he made no distinction between a phrase and a clause. It is true that in a popular sense any number of words may be called a phrase; as, "How do you do? Good-bye." But in grammar this word has a particular sense, and these last-

mentioned expressions do not agree with it. "In the year 1817" is a phrase, and "as they distinctly alleged" is a clause, because the former has neither subject nor predicate and the latter has both. I must say, too, that at the present day no corrector for the press (proof-reader) would allow those commas to stand after those *but*s. Further, *throwed* instead of *thrown* is not yet in common use; but I am inclined to think it will soon be, just like *sawed* instead of *sawn*, or *crowed* instead of *crew*.

143. Let us now take a compound sentence or two containing all the four points. "In a land of liberty it is extremely dangerous to make a distinct order of the profession of arms. In absolute monarchies this is necessary for the safety of the prince, and arises from the main principle of their constitution, which is that of governing by fear; but in free states the profession of a soldier, taken singly and merely as a profession, is justly an object of jealousy. In these states no man should take up arms, but with a view to defend his country and its laws: he puts off the citizen when he enters the camp: but it is because he is a citizen, and would continue so, that he makes himself for a while a soldier. The laws therefore and constitution of these kingdoms know no such state as that of a perpetual standing soldier, bred up to no other profession than that of war; and it was not till the reign of Henry VII. that the kings of England had so much as a guard about their persons." This passage is taken from Blackstone's Commentaries, Book I. Chap. 13. Here are four complete sentences. The first is a simple sentence. The other three are compound sentences. Each of these latter has its members, all very judiciously set off by points. The word *so*, in the third sentence, ought to be *such*, or the words *a citizen* ought to be repeated. But, with this trifling exception, these are very beautiful sentences. Nothing affected or confused in them: all is simple, clear, and harmonious.

144. You will now see that it is quite impossible to give any *precise rules* for the use of these several points.

Much must be left to taste: something must depend upon the weight which we may wish to give to particular words, or phrases; and something on the seriousness, or the levity, of the subject on which we are writing.

145. Besides these points, however, there are certain grammatical signs, or marks, which are made use of in the writing of sentences: the mark of *parenthesis*, the mark of *interrogation*, the mark of *exclamation*, the *apostrophe*, otherwise called the mark of elision, and the *hyphen*.

146. The mark of *Parenthesis* consists of two curved strokes, drawn across the line of writing, or of print. Its use is to enclose a phrase thrown in hastily to assist in elucidating our subject, or to add force to our assertions or arguments. But, observe, the parenthesis ought to be very sparingly used. It is necessarily an *interrupter*; it breaks in upon the regular course of the mind: it tends to divert the attention from the main object of the sentence. I will give you, from Mr. TULL, Chap. XIII, an instance of the omission of the parenthesis, and also of the proper employment of it. "PALLADIUS thought also, with others of the ancients, that Heaven was to be frightened with red cloth, with the feathers or the heart of an owl, *and a multitude of such ridiculous scarecrows*, from spoiling the fruits of the fields and gardens. The ancients having no rational principles, or theory of agriculture, placed their chief confidence in magical charms and enchantments, which he, who has the patience or curiosity to read, may find, under the title aforementioned, in CATO, in VARRO (*and even COLUMELLA is as fulsome as any of them*), all written in very fine language; which is most of the erudition that can be acquired as to field husbandry, from the Greek and Latin writers, whether in verse or prose." For want of the mark of parenthesis in the first of these sentences, we almost think, at the close of it, that the author is speaking of the *crows*, and not of

*Heaven*, being frightened from spoiling the fruits of the fields and the gardens. But with regard to the use of the parenthesis, I shall speak, perhaps, more fully by-and-by: for the employment of it is a matter of some importance.

It is, perhaps, worth mentioning that this word parenthesis, like all the words ending in *is*, changes the *i* into *e* in the plural: parentheses, crises, theses. So that we must speak of a word or sentence being enclosed in parentheses, not parenthesis.

147. The mark of *Interrogation*, which is written thus [?], is used when a question is asked; as, "*Who has my pen?*" "*What man is that?*" In these and numerous other cases, the mark is not necessary to our clearly comprehending the meaning of the writer. But this is not always the case. "What does he say? Put the horse into the stable." Again: "What does he say? Put the horse into the stable?" In *speaking*, this great difference in the meaning, in this instance, would be fully expressed by the voice and manner of the speaker; but, in writing, the mark of interrogation is, you see, absolutely necessary in order to accomplish the purpose.

148. The mark of *Exclamation*, or *Admiration*, is written thus [!], and, as its name denotes, is used to distinguish words or sentences that are exclamatory, from such as are not: "*What do you say!*" "*What do you say?*" The difference in the sense is very obvious here. Again: "*He is going away to-night!*" "*He is going away to-night.*" The last simply states the fact; but the first, besides stating the fact, expresses *surprise* at it.

149. The *Apostrophe*, or mark of *Elision*, is a comma placed above the line, thus [']. Elision means a *striking out*; and this mark is used for that purpose; as, *don't* for *do not*; *tho'* for *though*; *lov'd* for *loved*. I have mentioned this mark, because it is used properly enough in *poetry*; but, I beg you never to use it in prose in one single instance during your whole life. It ought to be

called the mark not of *elision*, but of *laziness* and *vulgarity*. It is necessary as the mark of the possessive case of nouns, as you have seen in Letter V, paragraph 47. That is its use, and any other employment of it is an abuse.

150. The *Hyphen* or *Conjoiner* is a little line used to connect words, or parts of words; as in *sea-fish*, *water-rat*. For here are two distinct words, though they, in these instances, make but one. Sometimes the hyphen is used to connect many words together: "The never-to-be-forgotten cruelty of the borough-tyrants." When, in writing, or in printing, the line ends with part of a word, a hyphen is placed after that part, in order to show that that part is to be joined, in the reading, with that which begins the next line.

151. These are all the *grammatical* marks; but there are others used in writing for the purpose of saving time and words. The mark of *quotation* or of *citing*. This mark consists of *two commas* placed thus: "There were many men." It is used to enclose words taken from other writings or from other persons' discourse; and, indeed, it is frequently used to enclose certain sentences, or words, of the writer, when he wishes to mark them as wholly distinct from the general course of any statement that he is making, or of any instruction that he is giving. I have, for instance, in the writing of these Letters to you, set off many of my examples by marks of *quotation*. In short, its use is to notify to the reader that such and such words, or such and such sentences, are not to be looked upon as forming part of the regular course of those thoughts which are at the present time coming from the mind of the writer.

152. This mark [¶] is found in the Bible. It stands for *paragraph*. This [§] is sometimes used instead of the word *section*. As to stars [\*] and the other marks which are used for the purpose of leading the eye of the reader to *notes*, in the same page, or at the end of the

book, they are perfectly arbitrary. You may use for this purpose any marks that you please. But let me observe to you here, that *notes* ought seldom to be resorted to. Like parentheses, they are *interrupters*, and much more troublesome interrupters, because they generally tell a much longer story. The employing of them arises, in almost all cases, from confusion in the mind of the writer. He finds the matter *too much for him*. He has not the talent to work it all up into one lucid whole; and, therefore, he puts part of it into *notes*. Notes are seldom *read*. If the text, that is to say, the main part of a writing, be of a nature to engage our earnest attention, we have not time to stop to read the notes: and if our attention be not earnestly engaged by the text, we soon lay down the volume, and of course read neither notes nor text.

153. As a mark of *abbreviation*, the full point is used; as, "Mr. Mrs." But I know of hardly any other words that ought to be abbreviated; and if these were not it would be all the better. People may indulge themselves in this practice, until at last they come to write the greater part of their words in single letters. The frequent use of abbreviation is always a mark of slovenliness and of vulgarity. I have known lords abbreviate almost the half of their words: it was, very likely, because they did not know how to spell them to the end. Instead of the word *and*, you often see people put &. For *what reason* I should like to know. But to this & is sometimes added a *c*; thus, &c. *And* is in Latin *et*, and *c* is the first letter of the Latin word *cætera*, which means *the like*, or *so on*. Therefore this &c. means *and the like*, or *and so on*. This abbreviation of a foreign word is a most convenient thing for such writers as have too much indolence or too little sense to say fully and clearly what they ought to say. If you *mean* to say *and the like*, or *and so on*, why not say it? This abbreviation is very frequently

made use of without the writer having any idea of its import. A writer on grammar says, "When these words are joined to *if*, *since*, &c., they are adverbs." But where is *the like* of *if*, or of *since*? The best way to guard yourself against the committing of similar errors is *never* to use this abbreviation.

154. The use of CAPITALS and *italics* I will notice in this place. In the books printed before the middle of the last century, a capital letter was used as the first letter of *every noun*. Capitals are now used more sparingly. We use them at the beginning of every paragraph, let the word be what it may; at the beginning of every sentence which follows a full-point; at the beginning of all *proper names*; at the beginning of all adjectives growing out of the names of countries, or nations; as, the *English* language; the *French* fashion; the *American* government. We use capitals, besides, at the beginning of any word, when we think the doing of it likely to assist in elucidating our meaning, but in general we use them as above stated. The use of *italic* characters in print is to point out, as worthy of particular attention, the words distinguished by those characters. In writing with a pen, a stroke is drawn under such words as we wish to be considered to be in *italics*. If we wish words to be put in SMALL CAPITALS, we draw two strokes under them; if in FULL CAPITALS, we draw three strokes under them.

155. The last thing I shall mention, under this head, is the *caret* [ $\Delta$ ], which is used to point upwards to a part which has been omitted, and which is inserted between the line, where the caret is placed, and the line above it. Things should be called by their right names, and this should be called the *blunder-mark*. I would have you, my dear James, scorn the use of this thing. *Think* before you write; let it be your custom to *write correctly* and in a *plain hand*. Be as careful that neatness, gram-



mar, and sense prevail, when you write to a blacksmith about shoeing a horse, as when you write on the most important subjects, and when you expect what you write to be read by persons whose good opinion you are most anxious to obtain or secure. Habit is powerful in all cases; but its power in this case is truly wonderful. When you write, bear constantly in mind that some one is to *read* and to *understand* what you write. This will make your handwriting, and also your meaning, *plain*. Never think of *mending* what you write. Let it go. No patching; no *after pointing*. As your pen moves, bear constantly in mind that it is making strokes which are to remain *for ever*. Far, I hope, from my dear James will be the ridiculous, the contemptible affectation, of writing in a slovenly or illegible hand; or that of signing his name otherwise than in plain letters.

156. In concluding this Letter, let me caution you against the use of what, by some, is called the *dash*. The dash is a stroke along the line; thus, "I am rich—I was poor—I shall be poor again." This is wild work indeed! Who is to know what is intended by the use of these *dashes*? Those who have thought proper, like Mr. Lindley Murray, to place the *dash* amongst the *grammatical points*, ought to give us some rule relative to its different longitudinal dimensions in different cases. The *inch*, the *three-quarter-inch*, the *half-inch* the *quarter-inch*; these would be something determinate; but, "*the dash*," without measure, must be a most perilous thing for a young grammarian to handle. In short, "*the dash*" is a cover for ignorance as to the use of points, and it can answer no other purpose.—A dash is very often put in crowded print, in order to save the room that would be lost by the breaks of distinct paragraphs. This is another matter. Here the dash comes *after a full-point*. It is the using of it in the body of a sentence against which I caution you.

As to the "no patching; no after-pointing," this is all very well for those who are endowed with uncommon talent for composition; but everybody cannot be a Shakespeare or a Cobbett. It is well known that Pope corrected and recorrected, polished and re-polished his lines "many a time and oft," and I have heard that Schiller and other good writers have done the same thing; Macaulay, for instance. You will have written many a page before you acquire such sureness of hand and perfect power of expression as never to need to change a word or add a point on looking over what you have written. In this very paragraph I had first written "everybody cannot be Shakespeares or Cobbetts;" but, on looking it over, I saw that *everybody*, the *subject*, is singular, and that therefore the *attribute* ought to agree with it. The eye often detects errors committed by the ear or the tongue; and the ear often detects errors committed by the hand or the pen.

Cobbett's advice concerning the dash is, I think, by no means to be followed. His contempt for this mark is one of his crotchets, of which he had quite a large stock. The dash is now universally used by good writers, and is, in its proper place, conducive to clearness; it is, in fact, quite as good a point as any other. There are some persons—especially half-educated young boarding-school misses—who clap in a dash for almost every pause; but this is no reason why it should not be used in its proper place, which is either immediately before some expression tending to complete the thought, or to enclose some explanatory clause thrown in like a parenthesis. The first case may be illustrated by the dash on page 1, immediately before the words "I mean dictation," and the second case by the above expression concerning half-educated young misses. To be sure, there are cases in which another point may, perhaps, be used with equal propriety; but this mark is now generally recognized as a proper mark in punctuation, and you may use it whenever you think proper.

The very best way of learning punctuation is, as I have elsewhere said, by writing to dictation. By the frequent writing down of other people's points, one gets a good general knowledge of the whole subject, and then one gradually forms a style of one's own. For it is well known that in the English language punctuation is to a great extent, a matter of taste; and Cobbett himself, as you must have seen by this time, is quite peculiar in *his* taste in this matter. He uses far more points than most other writers, especially commas, and he capitalizes far more words than most

others writers. This he does for the sake of emphasis, or of prominence; as, for instance, in the names of the parts of speech throughout this whole grammar. He overdoes this matter I think, and he uses too many italics; for in most sentences the proper emphasis must be left to the reader.

I notice that the tendency in our modern newspapers is to drop as many points as possible. Whether this is done to save space, time, and labor, or whether it is done for the sake of improvement, I do not know; but I do know that the punctuating of our New York editor of to-day presents a remarkable contrast to that of Cobbett; for you may see any day in the leading columns of the *Herald*, the *Tribune*, or the *Times*, sentences of seven or eight lines, with all manner of phrases and clauses, without a single point of any description, except a period at the end. I suppose they will leave that out too, by-and-by. I once heard of a painter who put a period between every word of the sign which he was painting, but put no point at the end. On being reproached with this, he exclaimed: "Why, every fool knows enough to stop when he comes to the end!" I suppose our New York editor would excuse his omission of points on the same principle, that every one should know enough to stop where he ought to stop. Cobbett committed, I think, the opposite error: he seems to have attempted to put a point after every word, or nearly every word, where a pause occurs; which is something that ought not to be done, and indeed never is nor can be done. Those pauses occurring where there are no points are rhetorical pauses, which the feeling or instinct of every good reader leads him to make. We often pause, for instance, for the sake of emphasis; as after *points*, *feeling* and *instinct* in the preceding sentence.

The matter of simple, compound, and complex sentences, which Cobbett merely touches, is very important to those who intend to pass an examination in grammar; for a knowledge of it is necessary in Analysis, and all those who pretend to have a "teaching" knowledge of grammar must know how to analyze. I will therefore try to give a little fuller explanation of it. "I study." This is a simple sentence, because it consists of but one simple proposition or assertion, having but one subject and one predicate. "I study and Charles plays." Here there are *two distinct* propositions, or *two distinct* clauses; hence the sentence is compound. (Mark that word *distinct*.) "When I study, Charles plays." Here there are also two clauses, but not distinct; they are dependent, or rather one depends on the other; hence the sentence is called

complex. The clause that makes complete sense (Charles plays), is the chief clause, and the other is the dependent one. You perceive that the dependent clause simply shows *when* Charles plays; therefore the main thing is the playing of Charles, and the other simply shows the time of his playing. When there is but one proposition or statement, the sentence is simple; when there are two or more distinct or separate propositions, the sentence is compound; but when there are two or more propositions, one depending on the other, the sentence is complex. "Every morning at five o'clock we walk into the forest beyond the river." Here is but one simple statement, *we walk*, and the rest consists of modifying phrases. We walk. When? Every morning. At what part of the morning? At five o'clock. Where? Into the forest. Where is the forest? Beyond the river.

Here is a good, though somewhat mechanical rule, for determining the nature of a sentence: Any sentence that you may cut into two sentences by placing a period after any word in it, is compound; any sentence, consisting of two or more clauses, which you can not thus cut into two sentences, is complex. A sentence consisting of but *one* proposition, having but *one* subject or predicate, is simple. Of Cobbett's three sentences, at the beginning of this paragraph 156, the first is complex, the second compound, the third simple.

And now I see that I have to explain something else that is necessary to a knowledge of Analysis,—I mean the classification of sentences into declarative, interrogative, exclamatory and imperative. "I study" is called a simple *declarative* sentence; declarative, because it declares or affirms something. Nine out of ten of all the sentences we utter are declarative. "Do I study?" is a simple *interrogative* sentence; interrogative, because it asks a question. An interrogation may sometimes be merely a forcible way of declaring something; as, Should any man be deprived of his liberty because he is black? But this is a figure, as you will see by-and-by. "How I love to study!" is a simple *exclamatory* sentence; exclamatory, because it contains an exclamation. "Study, and get on in the world!" is a compound *imperative* sentence; imperative, because it contains a command or an entreaty. Thus, we find that a sentence that declares or affirms anything is declarative; that one that asks a question is interrogative; that one that contains an exclamation is exclamatory; and that one that contains a command or an entreaty is imperative. Let me give you three more examples, covering the whole ground:

John Brown was hanged. (Simple declarative sentence.)

Was John Brown hanged? (Simple interrogative sentence.)

What a spectacle for men and angels! John Brown hanged and Jefferson Davis pardoned! (Compound exclamatory sentence.)

Hang John Brown, and pardon Jefferson Davis. (Compound imperative sentence.)

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## LETTER XV.

### SYNTAX, AS RELATING TO ARTICLES.

MY DEAR JAMES :

157. Before you proceed to my instructions relative to the employing of Articles, you will do well to read again all the paragraphs in Letter IV. Our Articles are so few in number, and they are subject to so little variation in their orthography, that very few errors can arise in the use of them. But, still, errors may arise; and it will be necessary to guard you against them.

158. You will not fall into very gross errors in the use of the Articles. You will not say, as in the erroneous passage cited by Doctor Lowth, "And I persecuted this way unto *the* death," meaning *death generally*; but you may commit errors less glaring. "The Chancellor informed the Queen of it, and she immediately sent for *the* Secretary and Treasurer." Now, it is not certain here, whether the Secretary and Treasurer be not one and the same person; which uncertainty would have been avoided by a repetition of the Article: "*the* Secretary and *the* Treasurer:" and you will bear in mind that, in every sentence, the very first thing to be attended to is *clearness as to meaning*.

159. Nouns which express the whole of a species do not, in general, take the definite Article; as, "*Grass* is good for horses, and *wheat* for men." Yet, in speaking of

the appearance of the face of the country, we say, “*The grass looks well; the wheat is blighted.*” The reason of this is that we are, in this last case, limiting our meaning to *the* grass and *the* wheat which are on the ground at this time. “How do *hops* sell? *Hops* are dear; but *the* hops look promising.” In this respect there is a passage in Mr. Tull which is faulty. “Neither could weeds be of any prejudice to *corn.*” It should be “*the corn;*” for he does not mean corn universally, but *the* standing corn, and *the* corn amongst which weeds grow; and, therefore, the definite Article is required.

160. “Ten shillings *the* bushel,” and like phrases, are perfectly correct. They mean, “ten shillings *by the* bushel, or *for the* bushel.” Instead of this mode of expression we sometimes use, “ten shillings *a* bushel:” that is to say, ten shillings *for a* bushel, or a bushel *at a time*. Either of these modes of expression is far preferable to *per* bushel; for the *per* is not English, and is, to the greater part of the people, a mystical sort of word.

161. The indefinite Article *a*, or *an*, is used with the words day, month, year, and others; as, once *a* day; twice *a* month; a thousand pounds *a* year. It means *in a* day, *in a* month, *in* or *for a* year; and though *per annum* means the same as this last, the English phrase is, in all respects, the best. The same may be said of *per cent.*, that is *per centum*, or, in plain English, *for the hundred*, or *a hundred*: by ten *per centum* we mean *ten for the hundred*, or *ten for a hundred*; and why can we not, then, say, in plain English, what we mean?

162. When there are several nouns following the indefinite Article, care ought to be taken that it *accord with them*. “A dog, cat, owl, and sparrow.” *Owl* requires *an*; and, therefore, the Article must be repeated in this phrase; as, *a* dog, *a* cat, *an* owl, and *a* sparrow.

163. Nouns, signifying fixed and settled collections of individuals, as *thousand*, *hundred*, *dozen*, *score*, take the

indefinite Article, though they are of plural meaning. It is a certain *mass*, or *number*, or *multitude*, called a *score*; and so on; and the Article agrees with these understood words, which are in the singular number.

In a recent announcement of a new novel by Robert Buchanan, the publishers quote this one line concerning it from the *London Spectator*: "The work of a genius and a poet,"—which is in itself a sufficient comment on the discriminating taste of the publisher and the culture of the critic. But I suppose a man may be a good publisher or a good critic, and yet not know how to write or to select good English.

You must say either "the first and the second class," or "the first and second classes;" not "the first and second class," which would mean *one* class that is both first and second. Take one or two similar examples: "I have read the first and the second chapter, or the first and second chapters; strike out the first and the second line, or the first and second lines." You may say, "the north and south line," because this is one line that runs north and south; but you cannot say "the north and west line." It will not do to say "the two first classes," because there cannot be any such thing as two *first* classes; but "the first two classes," which means simply the two classes that come first in order. So with other similar expressions; as, the first two pages, the first two days, &c. You must say, "He is a better speaker than writer," not "than a writer." "He is a statesman and historian," not "a statesman and an historian." "*Wanted*—A clerk and copyist." How often such an expression is used to mean two persons, whereas it really means one! "There lives in this town a philosopher and a poet." The predicate shows that one person is meant, while the subject indicates two. Mr. White quotes the following announcement from a street-car: "Passengers are requested not to hold conversation with either conductor or driver;" and then says: "Now this implies that there are two conductors and two drivers, and that the passengers are asked not to talk, or, in elegant phrase, 'hold conversation,' with either of them. The simple introduction of *the* rectifies the phrase: 'not to hold conversation with either *the* conductor or *the* driver.'"

I saw the other day in Pearl Street, New York, a place with this sign: "Hatters, Tailors, and Factory Stoves." This really means that the owner of the place has hatters and tailors to sell, as well as factory stoves. It might pass with the sign of the pos-

sessive: "Hatters', Tailors', and Factory Stoves;" but this, too, is bad, because hatters and tailors cannot be placed in the same category with a factory. It should be "Stoves for Hatters, Tailors, and Manufacturers," or "Hatters', Tailors', and Manufacturers' Stoves." But this would probably be too long for the stove-maker; so he preferred writing nonsense. This trying to make everything short is the root of these errors. Here is a man in Beekman Street who calls his Eating-House a "Commercial Lunch!" What kind of a compound may a *commercial* lunch be? Is it not a lunch made of various articles of commerce: beeswax, potatoes, turpentine, pig-iron, and leather? Of course he means a Lunch for Commercial People, or Lunch for Business Men, or still better, Business Men's Lunch; but this, no doubt, was too long for him.

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## LETTER XVI.

### SYNTAX, AS RELATING TO NOUNS.

MY DEAR JAMES

164. Read again Letter V, the subject of which is the Etymology of Nouns. Nouns are *governed*, as it is called, by verbs and prepositions; that is to say, these latter sorts of words *cause nouns to be in such or such a case*; and there must be a *concord*, or an *agreement*, between the Nouns and the other words, which, along with the Nouns, compose a sentence.

165. But these matters will be best explained when I come to the *Syntax of Verbs*, for, until we take the verb into account, we cannot go far in giving rules for the forming of sentences. Under the present head, therefore, I shall content myself with doing little more than to give some farther account of the manner of using the *possessive case* of Nouns; that being the only *case* to denote which our Nouns *vary their endings*.

166. The possessive case was pretty fully spoken of by me in the Letter just referred to; but there are certain



other observations to make with regard to the using of it in sentences. When the Noun which is in the possessive case is expressed by a circumlocution, that is to say by many words in lieu of one, the sign of the possessive case is joined to the last word; as, "*John*, the old farmer's, wife." "*Oliver*, the spy's, evidence." It is however much better to say, "The wife of *John*, the old farmer." The "evidence of *Oliver*, the spy."

167. When two or more Nouns in the possessive case follow each other, and are joined by a conjunctive conjunction, the sign of the possessive case is, when the thing possessed is the same, put to the last noun only; as, "Peter, Joseph, and Richard's estate." In this example, the thing possessed being one and the same thing, the sign applies equally to each of the three possessive Nouns. But "Peter's, Joseph's, and Richard's estate," implies that *each* has an estate; or, at least, it will admit of that meaning being given to it, while the former phrase will not.

168. Sometimes the sign of the possessive case is left out, and a *hyphen* is used in its stead; as, "Edwards, the *government-spy*." That is to say, "the government's spy;" or, "the spy *of the* government." These two words, joined in this manner, are called a *compound* Noun; and to this compounding of Nouns our language is very prone. We say "*chamber-floor, horse-shoe, dog-collar*;" that is to say, "*chamber's floor, horse's shoe, dog's collar*."

169. This is an advantage peculiar to our language. It enables us to say much in few words, which always gives strength to language; and, after *clearness*, strength is the most valuable quality that writing or speaking can possess. "The Yorkshiremen flew to arms." If we could not compound our words, we would have to say, "The men of the shire of York flew to arms." When you come to learn French, you will soon see how much the English language is better than the French in this respect.

170. You must take care, when you use the possessive case, not to use after it words which create a confusion in meaning. HUME has this sentence: "They flew to arms and attacked *Northumberland's* house, *whom* they put to death." We know what is *meant*, because *whom* can relate to *persons* only; but if it had been an attack on Northumberland's *men*, the meaning would have been that the *men were put to death*. However, the sentence, as it stands, is sufficiently incorrect. It should have been: "They flew to arms, and attacked the house of Northumberland, whom they put to death."

171. A passage from DOCTOR HUGH BLAIR, the author of *Lectures on Rhetoric*, will give you another instance of error in the use of the possessive case. I take it from the 24th Lecture: "In comparing Demosthenes and Cicero, most of the French critics are disposed to give the preference to the latter. P. Rapin, the Jesuit, in the parallels which he has drawn between some of the most eminent Greek and Roman writers, uniformly decides in favor of the Roman. For the preference which he gives to Cicero, he assigns and lays stress on one reason, of a pretty extraordinary nature, viz., that Demosthenes could not possibly have so clear an *insight* as Cicero *into* the manners and passions of men. Why? because *he* had not the advantage of *perusing Aristotle's Treatise on Rhetoric*, wherein, says our critic, *he* has fully laid open that *mystery*; and to support this weighty argument, *he* enters into a controversy with A. Gellius, in order to prove that Aristotle's Rhetoric was not published till after Demosthenes had spoken, *at least*, his most considerable orations." It is surprising that the Doctor should have put such a passage as this upon paper, and more surprising that he should leave it in this state after having perused it with that care which is usually employed in examining writings that are to be put into print, and especially writings in which every word is expected to be

used in a proper manner. In Bacon, in Tull, in Blackstone, in Hume, in Swift, in Bolingbroke: in all writers, however able, we find errors. Yet, though many of their sentences will not stand the test of strict grammatical criticism, the *sense* generally is clear to our minds; and we read on. But, in this passage of Dr. Blair, *all is confusion*: the mind is puzzled: we at last hardly know *whom* or *what* the writer is talking about, and we fairly come to a stand.

172. In speaking of the many faults in this passage, I shall be obliged to make here observations which would come under the head of pronouns, verbs, adverbs, and prepositions. The first two of the three sentences are in themselves rather obscure, and are well enough calculated for ushering in the complete confusion that follows. The *he*, which comes immediately after the word *because*, may relate to Demosthenes; but to what Noun does the second *he* relate? It would, when we first look at it, seem to relate to the same Noun as the first *he* relates to; for the Doctor cannot call *Aristotle's Treatise on Rhetoric* a *he*. No: in speaking of this the Doctor says "*wherein*;" that is to say, *in which*. He means, I dare say, that the *he* should stand for *Aristotle*; but it does not stand for *Aristotle*. This Noun is not a *nominative* in the sentence; and it cannot have the pronoun relating to it as such. This *he* may relate to *Cicero*, who may be supposed to have laid open a mystery in the perusing of the treatise; and the words which follow the *he* would seem to give countenance to this supposition; for *what* mystery is meant by the words "*that* mystery?" Is it the mystery of *rhetoric*, or the mystery of *the manners and passions of men*? This is not all, however; for the Doctor, as if bewitched by the love of confusion, must tack on another long member to the sentence, and bring forward another *he* to stand for *P. Rapin*, whom and whose argument we have, amidst the general confusion, wholly forgotten.

There is an error also in the use of the active participle *perusing*. "Demosthenes could not have so complete an insight as Cicero, because he *had not* the advantage of *perusing*. That is to say, the advantage of being engaged in *perusing*. But this is not what is meant. The Doctor means that he *had not had* the advantage of *perusing*; or, rather, that he *had not* the advantage of *having perused*. In other words, that Demosthenes could not have, or possess, a certain kind of knowledge at the time when he made his orations, because at that time, he had not, or did not possess, the advantage of *having perused*, or having *finished to peruse*, the treatise of Aristotle. Towards the close of the last sentence the adverb "*at least*" is put in a wrong place. The Doctor means, doubtless, that the adverb should apply to *considerable*, and not to *spoken*; but, from its being improperly placed, it applies to the latter, and not to the former. He means to say that Demosthenes had spoken the most considerable, *at least*, of his orations; but as the words now stand, they mean that he had *done the speaking part to them*, if he had done nothing more. There is an error in the use of the word "*insight*," followed, as it is, by "*into*." We may have a *look*, or *sight*, *into* a house, but not an *insight*. This would be to take an *inside view of an inside*.

173. We have here a pretty good proof that a knowledge of the Greek and Latin is not sufficient to prevent men from writing bad English. Here is a *profound scholar*, a teacher of Rhetoric, discussing the comparative merits of Greek and Latin writers, and disputing with a French critic; here he is writing English in a manner more incorrectly than you will, I hope, be liable to write it at the end of your reading of this little book. Lest it should be supposed that I have taken great pains to hunt out this erroneous passage of Doctor Blair, I will inform you that I have hardly looked into his book. Your brothers, in reading it through, marked a great number

of erroneous passages, from amongst which I have selected the passage just cited. With what propriety, then, are the Greek and Latin languages called the "*learned languages?*"

We take the form *'s* from the Germans, and hence it is called the Saxon possessive; we take the form *of the* from the French, and hence it is called the Norman possessive. You will notice that the Saxon possessive is used, generally, in speaking of *living* things, and the other in speaking of things *without life*: "the man's hat, the horse's tail, the cow's horns; the top of the house, the lid of the kettle, the color of the apple;" but this is by no means *always* the case, for we can speak of the *mountain's top* and of the *roar of the lion*. Sometimes we are obliged to use the Norman possessive to avoid a misconstruction, as in the case of "the house of Northumberland," above quoted.

There is another peculiar use of the possessive case, which Cobbett has not mentioned. "He spoke of *John's (his)* going to college. There is no doubt of the *bill's* passing the House." We often see the objective used in such cases, instead of the possessive; but the latter is correct. Just as we say "a friend of mine, of thine, of his, of hers, of yours, of theirs," so we say "a soldier of the king's, a horse of my neighbor's, a book of George's." So Cobbett ought to have said above, "this erroneous passage of Doctor Blair's."

You notice that the only case-change an English noun can undergo is the addition of *'s* in the possessive. In both English and French the nominative and objective cases of nouns are invariable. Not so in German. The following sentence will show you at a glance the difference between our language and the German in this respect:

nom.	obj.	nom.	obj.
The <i>boy</i> loves the <i>traveler</i> .		The <i>traveler</i> loves the <i>boy</i> .	
Der <i>Knabe</i> liebt den <i>Reisenden</i> .		Der <i>Reisende</i> liebt den <i>Knabe</i> .	

Here is a curious passage on this subject from Mr. White's "Everyday English"—a passage which, to prevent a confusion of apostrophes, I give in one paragraph, with none but Mr. White's points, except the dash at the beginning and at the end:

—The Board of Civil Service Examiners at Washington gave, as a test of the knowledge of the use of the apostrophe as a sign of the possessive case, the following sentence: "The Commissioner of Custom's decisions are correct," requiring the apostrophe to be

placed after "Customs." A dispute having arisen upon the point, and it being contended that the proper form was "The Commissioner's (of Customs) decisions are correct," an officer of the Treasury Department submitted the question to me for an opinion.—

And Mr. White declares that the decision of the Civil Service Board is correct. Now I am positive that, in this case, both Mr. White and the Board of Examiners are wrong. It is when a word or title is in the possessive case PLURAL that we put merely an apostrophe after the *s*; as, the Examiners' duties; the Commissioners' affairs; but the term "Commissioner of Customs" is *not* plural, any more than "Secretary of the Treasury" is plural. We say "The Secretary of the Treasury's report;" and if the Saxon possessive is to be used, grammar *demand*s that we say "The Commissioner of Custom's decisions;" for the sign of the possessive is for the *whole expression*, and not simply for *customs*. An apostrophe alone may be placed after *Customs*, because it will *sound* better, but not because it is *grammatical*.

But why use this form at all? Has it not been from a desire to avoid just such awkward expressions that the Norman possessive has come into use? Does it not sound much better to say "The decisions of the Commissioner of Customs" than "The Commissioner of Customs's decisions?"—By the bye, is it not somewhat remarkable, not to say absurd, that the Board of Examiners should give applicants for inferior offices questions such as they themselves are in dispute about, and concerning which even critics in language are at variance?

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## LETTER XVII.

### SYNTAX, AS RELATING TO PRONOUNS.

MY DEAR JAMES:

174. You will now read again Letter VI. It will bring you back to the subject of pronouns. You will bear in mind that personal Pronouns *stand for*, or in the *place of*, nouns; and that the greatest care ought always to be taken in using them, because, being small words, and in

frequent use, the proper weight of them is very often unattended to.

175. You have seen in the passage from Doctor Blair, quoted in the foregoing Letter, what confusion arises from the want of taking care that the Pronoun relate *clearly* to its nominative case, and that it be not left to be understood to relate to anything else. Little words, of great and sweeping influence, ought to be used with the greatest care; because errors in the using of them make such great errors in point of meaning. In order to impress, at the outset, these precepts on your mind, I will give you an instance of this kind of error from ADDISON; and, what is well calculated to heighten the interest you ought to feel upon the occasion, is, that the sentence which contains the error is, by Doctor Blair, held forth to students of languages, in the University of Edinburgh, as *a perfect model of correctness and of elegance*. The sentence is from Addison's Spectator, Number 411. "There are, indeed, but very few who know how to be idle and innocent, or have a relish of any pleasures that are not criminal; every diversion *they* take is at the expense of some one virtue or other, and *their* very first step out of business is into vice or folly." Dr. Blair says: "Nothing can be more elegant, or more finely turned, than this sentence. It is neat, *clear*, and musical. We could hardly alter one word, or displace one member, without spoiling it. Few sentences are to be found more finished, or more happy." See Blair's 20th Lecture on Rhetoric.

176. Now, then, my dear little James, let us see whether we plain English scholars have not a little more judgment than this professor in a *learned* University, who could not, you will observe, be a *Doctor*, until he had preached a sermon in the Latin language. What does the pronoun *they* mean in this sentence of Mr. Addison? What noun does it *relate to*; or *stand for*? What noun is the *nomi-*

*native* of the sentence? The nominative of the sentence is the word *few*, meaning *few persons*. Very well, then, the Pronoun *they* relates to this nominative; and the meaning of the sentence is this: "That but few persons know how to be idle and innocent; that *few persons* have a relish of any pleasures that are not criminal; that every diversion *these few persons* take is at the expense of some one virtue or other, and that the very first step of *these few persons* out of business is into vice or folly." So that the sentence says *precisely the contrary* of what the author meant; or, rather, the whole is perfect nonsense. All this arises from the misuse of the Pronoun *they*. If, instead of this word, the author had put *people in general*, or *most people*, or *most men*, or any word or words of the same meaning, all would have been right.

177. I will take another instance of the consequence of being careless in the use of personal Pronouns. It is from JUDGE BLACKSTONE, Book II, Chapter 6. "For the custom of the manor has, in both cases, so far superseded the will of the lord, that, provided the services be performed, or stipulated for by fealty, he cannot, in the first instance, refuse to admit the heir of *his* tenant upon *his* death; nor, in the second, can *he* remove *his* present tenant so long as *he* lives." Here are *lord*, *heir*, and *tenant*, all confounded. We may *guess* at the Judge's meaning; but we cannot say that we *know* what it is; we cannot say that we are *certain whose* life, or *whose* death, he is speaking of.

178. Never write a personal Pronoun, without duly considering *what noun* it will, upon a reading of the sentence, be *found to relate to*. There must be a noun, expressed or understood, to which the Pronoun clearly relates, or you will not write sense. "The *land-holder* has been represented as a monster which must be hunted down, and the *fund-holder* as a still greater evil, and both have been described as rapacious creatures, who



take from the people fifteen pence out of every quartern loaf. *They* have been told that Parliamentary Reform is no more than a half measure, changing only one-set of thieves for another; and that *they* must go to the land, as nothing short of that would avail *them*." This is taken from the memorable report of a committee of the House of Lords, in 1817, on which report the cruel dungeon bill was passed. Now, to *what nouns* do these Pronouns relate? Who are the *nominatives* in the first sentence? The *land-holder* and the *fund-holder*, to be sure; and, therefore, to them do the Pronouns relate. These lords mean, doubtless, that the *people* had been told that the *people* must go to the land; that nothing else would avail the *people*; but, though they *mean* this, they do not *say* it; and this part of their report is as false in grammar as other parts of the report were in fact.

179. When there are two or more nouns connected by a copulative conjunction, and when a Personal Pronoun is made use of to relate to them, or stand for them, you must take care that the personal Pronoun *agree* with them in number. "He was fonder of nothing than of *wit* and *raillery*; but he is far from being happy in it." This Doctor Blair, in his 19th Lecture, says of Lord Shaftesbury. Either *wit* and *raillery* are one and the same thing, or they are different things; if the former, one of the words is used unnecessarily; if the latter, the Pronoun ought to have been *them* and not *it*.

"I learned from Macaulay . . . . never to be afraid of using the same word or name over and over again, if by that means anything could be added to clearness or force. Macaulay never goes on, like some writers, talking about 'the former' and 'the latter,' 'he, she, it, they,' through clause after clause, while his reader has to look back to see which of several persons it is that is so darkly referred to. No doubt a pronoun, like any other word, may often be repeated with advantage, if it is perfectly clear who is meant by the pronoun. And with Macaulay's pronouns, it is always perfectly clear who is meant by them."—E. A.

Freeman, in the *International Review*. Quoted by A. S. Hill. I have frequently noticed that there is a misty uncertainty as to the meaning of sentences in which "the former" and "the latter" occur. How often one is obliged to stop for a moment, and consider which is "the former" and which "the latter"! I do not say you must not use these words; Cobbett, you see, uses them quite clearly in this last paragraph; but it is, generally, better to repeat the words for which they stand.

180. When, however, the nouns take the disjunctive conjunction *or*, the Pronoun must be in the singular; as, "When he shoots a partridge, a pheasant, or a woodcock, he gives it away."

181. Nouns of number, or multitude, such as *Mob, Parliament, Rabble, House of Commons, Regiment, Court of King's Bench, Den of Thieves*, and the like, may have Pronouns agreeing with them either in the singular or in the plural number; for we may, for instance, say of the House of Commons, "*They* refused to hear evidence against Castlereagh when Mr. Maddox accused him of having sold a seat;" or, "*It* refused to hear evidence." But we must be uniform in our use of the Pronoun in this respect. We must not, in the same sentence, and applicable to the same noun, use the singular in one part of the sentence and the plural in another part. We must not, in speaking of the House of Commons, for instance, say, "*They* one year voted unanimously that cheap corn was an evil, and the next year *it* voted unanimously that dear corn was an evil." There are persons who pretend to make very nice distinctions as to the cases when these nouns of multitude ought to take the singular, and when they ought to take the plural, Pronoun; but these distinctions are too nice to be of any real use. The rule is this: that nouns of multitude *may* take *either* the singular, or the plural, Pronoun; but not both in the same sentence.

This will never do; it is far too indefinite. The pronoun standing for a noun of multitude is used in the singular if the idea of

*unity* is to be conveyed, and in the plural if the idea of *plurality* is to be conveyed. Let me illustrate with some of these very nouns which Cobbett so sarcastically huddles together: "The mob now began to scatter in every direction, and *they* set up a hideous yell as *they* moved off. The mob came on in one compact body, and *it* did not fail to press *itself* through the gates of the palace. He hated the rabble, because *they* hated him. The rabble of New York *has* a language and a literature of *its* own. The House of Commons could not agree on any measure of Reform; so they were dismissed by the king. The House of Commons was unanimous in condemning the obstructing Irish members, and *it* suspended them for two weeks. When the Court of King's Bench passed sentence on Mr. Cobbett, *it* refused to reconsider *its* decision. I have been informed that there was some difference of opinion in the Court of King's Bench concerning Mr. Cobbett's case, though *they* refused to reconsider *their* decision. Here is a den of thieves; suppress *it*. We came upon a den of thieves, who were so numerous that we did not venture to attack *them*." Thus, you see, that the singularity or plurality of the pronoun standing for a noun of multitude depends entirely upon whether an idea of *unity* or of *plurality* is to be conveyed.

182. As to *gender*, it is hardly possible to make a mistake. There are no terminations to denote gender, except in the third person singular, *he*, *she*, or *it*. We do, however, often *personify* things. Speaking of a *nation*, we often say *she*; of the *sun*, we say *he*; of the *moon*, we say *she*. We may personify things at our pleasure; but we must take care to be consistent, and not call a thing *he*, or *she*, in one part of a sentence, and *it* in another part. The occasions when you ought to personify things, and when you ought not, cannot be stated in any *precise rule*. Your own taste and judgment will be your best guides. I shall give you my opinion about figures of speech in a future Letter.

In an article on Longfellow, in the North American Review for July, 1882, the writer speaks of meeting "Mrs. William Cullen Bryant and her daughter, and others of my countrymen;" but you can hardly make such a blunder as that.

183. Nouns which denote sorts, or kinds, of living crea-

tures, and which do not of themselves distinguish the male from the female, such as *rabbit, hare, hog, cat, pheasant, fowl*, take the neuter Pronoun, unless we happen to know the gender of the individual we are speaking about. If I see you with a cock pheasant in your hand, I say, "Where did you shoot *him*?" but if you tell me you have a *pheasant*, I say, "Where did you shoot *it*?" (See paragraphs 42 and 43.)

184. The personal Pronouns in their *possessive case* must, of course, agree in number and gender with their correspondent nouns or Pronouns: "John and Thomas have been so foolish as to sell *their* land and to purchase what is called stock; but their sister, who has too much sense to depend on a bubble for her daily bread, has kept *her* land; *theirs* is gone forever; but *hers* is safe." So they must, also, in their *objective case*: "John and Thomas will lose the interest of their money, which will soon cease to be paid to *them*. The rents of their sister will be regularly paid to *her*; and Richard will also enjoy his income, which is to be paid to *him* by his sister." If there be nouns of both genders used before Pronouns, care must be taken that no confusion or obscurity arise from the misuse of the Pronoun. HUME says: "They declared it treason to attempt, imagine, or speak evil of the king, queen, or *his* heirs." This has, at least, a meaning, which shuts out the heirs of the queen. In such a case the feminine as well as the masculine pronoun should be used: "*his* or *her* heirs."

185. Take care, in using the personal Pronouns, not to employ the *objective case* where you ought to employ the *nominative*; and take care also of the *opposite error*. "Him strikes I: Her loves he." These offend the ear at once. But when a number of words come in between the discordant parts, the ear does not detect the error. "It was some of those who came hither last night, and went away this morning, who did the mischief, and not

my brother and *me*." It ought to be "my brother and *I*." For I am not, in this instance, the *object* but the *actor*, or supposed actor. "Who broke that glass?" "It was *me*." It ought to be *I*; that is to say, "It was *I who broke it*." Fill up the sentence with all the words that are understood; and if there be errors, you will soon discover them. After the words *than* and *as*, this error, of putting the objective for the nominative, is frequently committed; as, "John was very rich, but Peter was richer than *him*;" and, at the same time, as learned as *him*, or any of his family." It ought to be richer than *he*; as learned as *he*; for the full meaning here is, "richer than *he was*; as learned as *he was*." But it does not always happen that the nominative case comes after *than* or *as*. "I love you more than *him*; I give you more than *him*; I love you as well as *him*;" that is to say, I love you more than *I love him*; I give you more than *I give to him*; I love you as well as *I love him*. Take away *him* and put *he*, in all these cases, and the grammar is just as good, only the meaning is quite different. "I love you as well as *him*," means that I love you as well as *I love him*; but "I love you as well as *he*," means, that I love you as well as *he loves you*.

186. You see, then, of what importance this distinction of cases is. But you must not look for *this word*, or *that word*, coming before or coming after to be your guide. It is reason which is to be your sole guide. When the person or thing represented by the Pronoun is the *object*, then it must be in the objective case; when it is the *actor*, or when it is merely the person or thing said *to be* this or that, then it must be in the nominative case. Read again paragraphs 46, 47, and 48, of Letter V.

187. The errors committed with regard to the confounding of cases arise most frequently when the Pronouns are placed, in the sentences, at a great distance from the words which are connected with them, and which

determine the case. "*He* and his sister, and not their uncle and cousins, the estate was given to." Here is nothing that *sounds* harsh; but, bring the Pronoun close to the preposition that demands the objective case; say the estate was given *to he*; and then you perceive the grossness of the error in a moment. "The work of national ruin was pretty effectually carried on *by* the ministers; but more effectually by the paper-money makers than *they*." This does not hurt the ear; but it ought to be *them*; "more effectually than *by them*."

188. The Pronouns *mine, thine, theirs, yours, hers, his*, stand frequently by themselves; that is to say, not followed by any noun. But then the noun is *understood*. "That is *hers*." That is to say, her *property*; her *hat*, or whatever else. No difficulty can arise in the use of these words.

Except one. Some people erroneously write these words with an apostrophe; *our's*, etc. A gentleman once showed me a letter which he considered perfect. So it was; all except the last two words, which were written thus: "Your's truly."

189. But the use of the personal Pronoun *it* is a subject of considerable importance. Read again paragraphs 60 and 61, Letter VI. Think well upon what you find there; and when you have done that, proceed with me. This Pronoun with the verb *to be* is in constant use in our language. To say, "Your uncle *came* hither last night," is not the same thing as to say, "*It was* your uncle *who came* hither last night," though the *fact* related be the same. "*It is I* who write" is very different from "*I write*," though in both cases, my writing is the fact very clearly expressed, and is one and the same fact. "*It is those men* who deserve well of their country," means a great deal more than "*Those men* deserve well of their country." The principal verbs are the same; the prepositions are the same; but the real meaning is different. "*It is* the dews and showers *that* make the grass grow,"

is very different from merely observing, "*Dews and showers make the grass grow.*"

190. DOCTOR LOWTH has given it as his opinion, that it is *not correct* to place plural nouns or pronouns after the *it*, thus used; an opinion which arose from the want of a little more reflection. The *it* has nothing to do, grammatically speaking, with the rest of the sentence. The *it*, together with the verb *to be*, express *states of being*, in some instances, and in others this phrase serves to mark, in a strong manner, *the subject, in a mass*, of what is about to be affirmed or denied. Of course, this phrase, which is in almost incessant use, may be followed by nouns and pronouns in the singular, or in the plural number. I forbear to multiply examples, or to enumerate the various ways in which this phrase is used, because one grain of reasoning is worth whole tons of memory. The *principle* being once in your mind, it will be ready to be applied to every class of cases, and every particular case of each class.

An example, however, often sticks where the principle fails to do so. "It is I; it is thou; it is he; it is she; it is we; it is you; it is they; it is the devil; it is the devils." These are all correct; because *it* is the subject, *is* is the predicate, and what follows is the attribute, which may be singular or plural.—I cannot help remarking that the pause after "thus used" in the third line of the above paragraph is a capital example of the place where the DASH ought to be used.

191. For want of reliance on principles, instead of examples, how the latter have swelled in number, and grammar-books in bulk! But it is much easier to quote examples than to lay down principles. For want of a little thought as to the matter immediately before us, some grammarians have found out "*an absolute case*," as they call it; and MR. LINDLEY MURRAY gives an instance of it in these words: "*Shame being lost, all virtue is lost.*" The full meaning of the sentence is this: *It being, or the*

*state of things being such, that "shame is lost, all virtue is lost."*

This "shame being lost" is called by some grammarians a participial phrase; by others, an abridged participial clause, standing for "As shame is lost." Therefore, "all virtue is lost, as shame is lost;" the second clause modifying the first. "On arriving in London, I went to see Madame Tussaud's Exhibition." These first four words form another such participial phrase or abridged participial clause, modifying *went*: "I went, on arriving in London (when I arrived in London), to see Madame Tussaud's Exhibition."—This *absolute case* is something like what other grammarians call the *independent case*: "Charles, mind what you are about. Sir, I deny the charge. I have seen a wax figure of Cobbett, boys, at Madame Tussaud's Exhibition." *Charles, Sir, boys*, are here said to be in the *independent case*, because they have no bearing on any other part of the sentence. These words may, however, be resolved into the *nominative case*, thus: To you, whose name is Charles, I have this to say: mind what you are about. To you, who are a Sir—to you, who are boys, etc. Remember, therefore, that any word standing *alone* like these, or in an exclamation—O Roscoe! Roscoe! what an ass you have made of yourself!—is said to be in the *independent case*.

192. Owing to not seeing the use and power of this *it* in their true light, many persons, after long puzzling, think they must make the pronouns which immediately follow conform to the cases which the verbs and prepositions of the sentence demand. "It is *them*, and not the people, whom I address myself *to*." "It was *him*, and not the other man, that I sought *after*." The prepositions *to* and *after* demand an objective case; and they have it in the words *whom* and *that*. The Pronouns which follow the *it* and the verb *to be* must *always* be in the *nominative case*. And, therefore, in the above examples, it should be, "It is *they*, and not the other people;" "It was *he*, and not the other man."

193. This *it* with its verb *to be* is sometimes employed with the preposition *for*, with singular force and effect. "*It is for* the guilty to live in fear, to skulk and to hang



their heads; but *for* the innocent *it is* to enjoy ease and tranquillity of mind, to scorn all disguise, and to carry themselves erect." This is much more forcible than to say, "The guilty generally live in fear," and so on, throughout the sentence. The word *for*, in this case, denotes appropriateness, or fitness; and the full expression would be this: "To the *state of being*, or *state of things* called guiltiness, to live in fear *is fitting*, or *is appropriate*." If you pay attention to the *reason* on which the use of these words is founded, you will never be at a loss to use them properly.

194. The word *it* is the greatest troubler that I know of in language. It is so small, and so convenient, that few are careful enough in using it. Writers seldom spare this word. Whenever they are at a loss for either a nominative or an objective to their sentence, they, without any kind of ceremony, clap in an *it*. A very remarkable instance of this pressing of poor *it* into actual service, contrary to the laws of grammar and of sense, occurs in a piece of composition, where we might, with justice, insist on correctness. This piece is on the subject of grammar; it is a piece written by a *doctor of divinity*, and read by him to students in grammar and language in an academy; and the very sentence that I am now about to quote is selected, by the author of a grammar, as testimony of high authority in favor of the excellence of his work. Surely, if correctness be ever to be expected, it must be in a case like this. I allude to two sentences in the "Charge of the REVEREND DOCTOR ABERCROMBIE to the Senior Class of the Philadelphia Academy," published in 1806; which sentences have been selected and published by MR. LINDLEY MURRAY, as a testimonial of the *merits* of his grammar; and which sentences are, by MR. MURRAY, given to us in the following words: "The unwearied *exertions* of this gentleman *have* done more towards elucidating the obscurities, and embellishing the structure

of our language, than any *other writer* on the subject. *Such a work* has long been wanted; and, from the success with which *it* is executed, cannot be too highly appreciated."

195. As, in the learned Doctor's opinion, obscurities can be elucidated, and, as, in the same opinion, MR. MURRAY is an able hand at this kind of work, it would not be amiss were the grammarian to try his skill upon this article from the hand of his dignified eulogist; for here is, if one may use the expression, a constellation of obscurities. Our poor oppressed *it*, which we find forced into the Doctor's service in the second sentence, relates to "*such a work*," though this work is nothing that has an existence, notwithstanding it is said to be "*executed*." In the first sentence, the "*exertions*" become, all of a sudden, a "*writer*;" the *exertions* have done more than "*any other writer*;" for, mind you, it is not the *gentleman* that has done anything; it is "*the exertions*" that *have* done what is said to be done. The word *gentleman* is in the possessive case, and has nothing to do with the action of the sentence. Let us give the sentence a turn, and the Doctor and the grammarian will hear how it will sound. "This gentleman's *exertions* have done more than any other writer." This is upon a level with "This gentleman's *dog* has killed more hares than any other sportsman." No doubt DOCTOR ABERCROMBIE meant to say, "*the exertions of this gentleman have done more than those of any other writer*. Such a work as this gentleman's has long been wanted: his work, seeing the successful manner of its execution, cannot be too highly commended." *Meant!* No doubt at all of that! And when we hear a Hampshire ploughboy say, "Poll Cherry-cheek have giv'd I thick handkecher," we know very well that he *means* to say, "Poll Cherrycheek has given me this handkerchief;" and yet, we are but too apt to *laugh at him*, and to call him *ignorant*; which is wrong; be-

cause he has no pretensions to a knowledge of grammar, and he may be very skillful as a ploughboy. However, we will not laugh at DOCTOR ABERCROMBIE, whom I knew, many years ago, for a very kind and worthy man, and who baptized your elder brother and elder sister. But if we may, in any case, be allowed to laugh at the ignorance of our fellow-creatures, that case certainly does arise when we see a professed grammarian, the author of voluminous precepts and examples on the subject of grammar, producing, in imitation of the possessors of invaluable medical secrets, testimonials vouching for the efficacy of his literary panacea, and when, in those very testimonials, we find most flagrant instances of bad grammar.

196. However, my dear James, let this strong and striking instance of the misuse of the word *it* serve you in the way of caution. Never put an *it* upon paper without thinking well of what you are about. When I see many *its* in a page, I always tremble for the writer.

197. We now come to the second class of Pronouns; that is so say, the RELATIVE PRONOUNS, of which you have had some account in Letter VI, paragraphs 62, 63, 64, 65, and 66; which paragraphs you should now read over again with attention.

198. *Who*, which becomes *whose* in the possessive case, and *whom* in the objective case, is, in its use, confined to rational beings; for though some writers do say, "the country *whose* fertility is great," and the like, it is not correct. We must say, "the country the fertility of *which*." But if we *personify*; if, for instance, we call a nation a *she*, or the sun a *he*, we must then, if we have need of relative Pronouns, take these, or the word *that*, which is a relative applicable to rational as well as irrational and even inanimate beings.

It is now correct to say "the country whose fertility is great;" for it is a much more direct and easy way of speaking than the other. This form was begun by the poets, and is now constantly used by prose-writers.

199. The errors which are most frequent in the use of these relative Pronouns arise from not taking care to use *who* and *whom*, when they are respectively demanded by the verbs or prepositions. “*To who* did you speak? *Whom* is come to-day?” These sentences are too glaringly wrong to pass from our pens to the paper. But, as in the case of personal Pronouns, when the relatives are placed, in the sentence, at a distance from their antecedents, or verbs or prepositions, the ear gives us no assistance. “*Who*, of all the men in the world, do you think I *saw*, the other day? *Who*, for the sake of his numerous services, the office was given to.” In both these cases it ought to be *whom*. Bring the verb in the first, and the preposition in the second case, closer to the relative; as, *who* I *saw*; *to who* the office was given; and you will see the error at once. But take care! “*Whom* of all men in the world, do you think *was* chosen to be sent as an ambasssador? *Whom*, for the sake of his numerous services, *had* an office of honor bestowed upon him.” These are nominative cases, and ought to have *who*; that is to say, “*who was* chosen; *who had* an office.” I will not load you with numerous examples. Read again about the *nominative* and *objective* cases in Letter V. Apply your *reason* to the subject. *Who* is the nominative, and *whom* the objective. Think well about the matter, and you will want no more examples.

200. There is, however, an erroneous way of employing *whom*, which I must point out to your particular attention, because it is so often seen in very good writers, and because it is very deceiving. “The Duke of Argyle, *than whom* no man was more hearty in the cause.” “Cromwell, *than whom* no man was better skilled in artifice.” A hundred such phrases might be collected from HUME, BLACKSTONE, and even from Doctors BLAIR and JOHNSON. Yet they are bad grammar. In all such cases, *who* should be made use of; for it is *nominative* and not

objective. "No man was more hearty in the cause *than he was*; no man was better skilled in artifice *than he was*." It is a very common Parliament-house phrase, and therefore presumptively *corrupt*; but it is a Doctor Johnson phrase too; "Pope, *than whom* few men had more vanity." The Doctor did not say, "Myself, *than whom* few men have been found more base, having, in my Dictionary, described a pensioner as a slave of state, and having afterwards myself become a pensioner."

201. I differ, as to this matter, from Bishop Lowth, who says that "the relative *who*, having reference to no verb or preposition understood, but only to its antecedent, when it follows *than*, is *always in the objective case*; even though the Pronoun, if substituted in its place, would be in the nominative." And then he gives an instance from Milton. "Beelzebub, *than whom*, Satan except, none higher sat." It is curious enough that this sentence of the Bishop is, itself, ungrammatical! Our poor unfortunate *it* is so placed as to make it a matter of doubt whether the Bishop meant it to relate to *who*, or to *its antecedent*. However, we know his meaning; but, though he says that *who*, when it follows *than*, is always in the objective case, he gives us no *reason* for this departure from a clear general principle; unless we are to regard as a reason the example of Milton, who has committed many hundreds, if not thousands, of grammatical errors, many of which the Bishop himself has pointed out. There is a sort of side-wind attempt at a reason in the words, "having reference to no *verb* or *preposition* understood." I do not see the *reason*, even if this could be; for it appears to me impossible that a Noun or Pronoun can exist in a grammatical state without having reference to some *verb* or *preposition*, either expressed or understood. What is meant by Milton? "Than Beelzebub none *sat* higher, except Satan." And when, in order to avoid the repetition of the word Beelzebub, the relative

becomes necessary, the full construction must be, "no devil sat higher *than who* sat, except Satan;" and not "no devil sat higher *than whom* sat." The supposition that there can be a Noun or Pronoun which has reference to *no verb*, and *no preposition*, is certainly a mistake.

Mr. Swinton quotes these two sentences about Pope and Beelzebub, and then says: "This construction must be regarded as anomalous; but it has been used by so many reputable authors that we can scarcely refuse to accept it." It seems to me that this is one of those cases where long usage has made a faulty expression *appear* or *sound* correct; just as there are many people who think "it is me" sounds much better than "it is I." I am sure "than whom" is now much more rarely used than formerly.

202. *That*, as a relative, may, as we have seen, be applied either to persons or things; but it has no possessive case, and no change to denote the other two cases. We say, "the man *that gives*, and the man *that* a thing is given *to*." But there are some instances when it can hardly be called proper to use *that* instead of *who* or *whom*. Thus, directly after a proper name, as in HUME: "The Queen gave orders for taking into custody the Duke of Northumberland, who fell on his knees to the Earl of Arundel, *that* arrested him." *Who* would have been much better, though there was a *who* just before in the sentence. In the same author: "Douglas, *who* had prepared his people, and *that* was bent upon taking his part openly." This never ought to be, though we see it continually. *Either* may do; but *both* never ought to be relatives of the same antecedent, in the same sentence. And, indeed, it is very awkward, to say the least of it, to use *both* in the same sentence, though relating to different antecedents, if all these be names of rational beings. "The Lords, *who* made the first false report, and the Commons, *that* seemed to vie with their Lordships in falsehood, became equally detested." *That*, as a relative, cannot take the preposition or verb immediately before it. I may say "The man *to whom* I gave a book;" but I cannot say, "the

man *to that* I gave a book ;” nor “the knife *to that* I put a handle.” “Having defeated *whom*, he remained quiet ;” but we cannot, in speaking of persons, say, “Having defeated *that*, he remained quiet.”

203. *Which*, as a relative Pronoun, is applied to irrational beings only, and, as to those beings, it may be employed indifferently with *that*, except in the cases where the relative comes directly after a *verb* or a *preposition*, in the manner just spoken of. We say, “the town, the horse, the tree, *which* ; or *to which* ;” and so on. And we say, “the town, the tree, the horse, *that* ;” but not *to* or *for that*.

204. We may, in speaking of nouns of multitude, when the multitude consists of rational creatures, and when we choose to consider it as a *singular* noun, make use of *who* or *whom*, or of *which*, just as we please. We may say, “the crowd *which* was going up the street ;” or “the crowd *who* was going up the street ;” but we cannot make use of both in the same sentence and relating to the same noun. Therefore, we cannot say, “the crowd *who* was going up the street and *which* was making a great noise.” We must take the *who*, or the *which*, in both places. If such noun of multitude be used in the *plural number*, we then go on with the idea of the rationality of the individuals in our minds ; and therefore we make use of *who* and *whom*. “The assembly, *who* rejected the petition, but to *whom* another was immediately presented.”

205. *Who*, *whose*, *whom*, and *which*, are employed in asking questions ; to which, in this capacity, we must add *what*. “*Who* is in the house ? *Whose* gun is that ? *Whom* do you love best ? *What* has happened to-day ?” *What* means, generally, as a relative, “*the thing which* ;” as, “Give me *what* I want.” It may be used in the nominative and in the objective case : “*What* happens to-day may happen next week ; but I know not to *what* we shall

come at last ;” or, “ *The thing which* happens to-day may happen next week ; but I know not *the thing which* we shall come to at last.”

This little word *what* may, sometimes, curiously enough, be both subject and object in the same sentence. “Give what is proper. Tell me what was done.” In the first sentence, *what* is the object of *give* and the subject of *is proper* ; and may be set down as equal to *that which*. In the second sentence, *what* is the object of *tell* and the subject of *was done* ; *me* being the indirect object, or adverbial phrase, meaning *to me*. You may also say that the whole clause *what was done* is the object of *tell*, and call it an objective clause.

Notice that the relative pronoun is sometimes omitted, but only in the objective case ; as, You are the boy (whom) I mean ; this is the book (that) I want. This omission of words, which grammarians call an ellipsis, is very common in our tongue ; as, Dinner done, we walked into the garden ; that argument granted, I proceed to the next.

The place of the relative pronoun is a mighty important matter. Somebody sent Mr. White this striking instance of such misplacement : “Just now, I saw a man talking to the Rev. Mr. Blank, who was so drunk that he could hardly stand.” The last two clauses were intended, of course, to come after *man*, who was drunk, and not the reverend gentleman. Here are some more examples from Greene’s Grammar : “Mr. Brown needs a physician who is sick. The oranges came in a basket which we ate. Found, a gold watch by a gentleman with steel hands. A man brought home my Newfoundland dog in his shirt-sleeves.” These last two sentences have no relative pronoun, but they are good examples of misplacement of words. “I told you to do that this morning” is a very different thing from “I told you, this morning, to do that.”

Here is an advertisement which I have just noticed in the *Tribune* : “Conditioned scholars coached for fall examinations during the summer months at Tarrytown.” These words, as they stand, mean that the scholars are to be coached (that is, prepared) for fall examinations, taking place during the summer months at Tarrytown ; but the advertiser did not mean anything of the kind. He meant to say, “Conditioned scholars coached, during the summer months, at Tarrytown, for fall examinations.” You will say that the fall examinations could not be during the *summer* months. No ; but the words say so.



206. *Which*, though in other cases it cannot be employed as a relative with nouns which are the names of rational beings, is, with such nouns, employed in asking questions; as, "The tyrants allege that the petition was disrespectful. *Which* of the tyrants?" Again: "One of the petitioners had his head cleaved by the yeomanry. *Which*?" That is to say, "Which of the petitioners was it?"

207. *What*, when used in asking for a repetition of what has been said—as, *what?*—means, "Tell me *that which*, or *the thing which*, you have said." This word is used, and with great force, in the way of exclamation: "What! rob us of our right of suffrage, and then, when we pray to have our right restored to us, shut us up in dungeons!" The full meaning is this: "*What do they do?* They rob us of our right."

208. It is not, in general, advisable to crowd these relatives together; but it sometimes happens that it is done. "*Who, that* has any sense, can believe such palpable falsehoods? *What, that* can be invented, can disguise these falsehoods? By *whom, that* you ever heard of, was a pardon obtained from the mercy of a tyrant? Some men's rights have been taken from them by force and by genius, but *whose, that* the world ever heard of before, were taken away by ignorance and stupidity?"

209. *Whosoever, whosoever, whomsoever, whatsoever, whichsoever*, follow the rules applicable to the original words. The *so* is an adverb, which, in its general acceptance, means *in like manner*; and *ever*, which is also an adverb, means, at *any time*, at *all times*, or *always*. These two words, thus joined in *whosoever*, mean, *who in any case that may be*; and so of the other three words. We sometimes omit the *so*, and say, *whoever, whomever, whatever*, and even *whosever*. It is a mere abbreviation. The *so* is understood; and it is best not to omit to write it. Sometimes the *soever* is separated from the Pronoun:

“*What man soever he might be.*” But the main thing is to understand the *reason* upon which the use of these words stands ; for, if you understand that, you will always use the words properly.

210. The DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS have been described in Letter VI, paragraph 67 ; and I have very little to add to what is there said upon the subject. They never change their endings to denote gender or case ; and the proper application of them is so obvious that it requires little to be said about it. However, we shall hear more of these Pronouns when we come to the Syntax of *Verbs*. One observation I will make here, however, because it will serve to caution you against the commission of a very common error. You will hardly say, “*Them* that write ;” but you may say, as many do, “We ought always to have great regard *for them* who are wise and good.” It ought to be, “*for those* who are wise and good ;” because the word *persons* is understood : “*those persons* who are wise and good ;” and it is bad grammar to say, “*them persons* who are wise and good.” But observe, in *another sense*, this sentence would be correct. If I be speaking of *particular persons*, and if my object be to make you understand that they are *wise and good*, and also that *I love them* ; then I say, very correctly, “I love *them*, who are wise and good.” Thus : “The father has two children ; he loves *them*, who are wise and good ; and they love him, who is very indulgent.” It is the *meaning* that must be your guide, and *reason* must tell you what is the meaning. “*They*, who can write, save a great deal of bodily labor,” is very different from “*Those* who can write save a great deal of bodily labor.” The *those* stands for *those persons* ; that is to say, *any persons, persons in general*, who can write : whereas, the *they*, as here used, relates to some particular persons ; and the sentence means that these particular persons *are able to write*, and, by that means, *they* save a great deal of bodily labor. DOCTOR BLAIR, in

his 21st Lecture, has fallen into an error of this sort: thus, "These two paragraphs are extremely worthy of Mr. ADDISON, and exhibit a style, which *they*, who can successfully imitate, may esteem themselves happy." It ought to be *those* instead of *they*. But this is not the only fault in this sentence. Why say "*extremely* worthy?"

*Worthiness* is a quality which hardly admits of *degrees*, and surely it does not admit of *extremes*! Then, again, at the close: to *esteem* is to *prize*, to *set value on*, to *value highly*. How, then, can men "*esteem* themselves happy?" How can they *prize themselves* happy? How can they *highly value themselves* happy? My dear James, let chambermaids, and members of the House of Commons, and learned Doctors, write thus: be you content with plain words which convey your meaning; say that a thing is *quite worthy* of a man; and that men may *deem* themselves happy.—It is truly curious that LINDLEY MURRAY should, even in the *motto* in the title-page of his *English Grammar*, have selected a sentence containing a *grammatical error*; still more curious that he should have found this sentence in DOCTOR BLAIR's Lectures on Language; and most curious of all that this sentence should be intended to inculcate the *great utility of correctness* in the composing of sentences. Here, however, are the proofs of this combination of curious circumstances: "*They* who are learning to compose, and arrange their sentences with accuracy and order, are learning, at the same time, to think with accuracy and order." Poh! Never think a man either learned or good merely on account of his being called a Doctor.

211. The INDETERMINATE PRONOUNS have been enumerated in Letter VI, paragraph 71. They are sometimes *Adjectives*, as is stated in that paragraph. *Whoever*, *whatever*, and *whichever* (that is, *whosoever*, *whatsoever*, *whichever*), though relatives, are indeterminate too. But, indeed, it signifies little how these words are *classed*. It

is the *use* of them that we ought to look to. *Every*, which I have now reckoned amongst these Pronouns, is never, now-a-days, used *without a noun*, and is therefore, in fact, an *adjective*. The error that is most frequently committed in using these Pronouns is the putting of the *plural* verb or *plural* Pronoun after nouns preceded by *every*, *each*, or *either*; especially in the case of *every*: as, “*every man; every body; every house.*” These are understood to mean, all the *men*, all the *people*, all the *houses*; but, only *one man*, *one body*, *one house*, is spoken of, and therefore the verb ought to be in the singular; as, “*everybody is disgusted;*” and not “*every body are disgusted.*”

212. Before you use any of these words, you should think well on their *true meaning*; for, if you do this, you will seldom commit errors in the use of them. DOCTOR JOHNSON, in his *Rambler*, No. 177, has this passage: “*Every one* of these virtuosos looked on all his associates as wretches of depraved taste and narrow notions. *Their* conversation was, *therefore*, fretful and waspish, *their* behavior brutal, *their* merriment bluntly sarcastic, and *their* seriousness gloomy and suspicious.” Now these *theirs* certainly relate to *every one*, though the author meant, without doubt, that they should relate to *the whole body of virtuosos*, including the *every one*. The word *therefore* adds to the confusion. The virtuosos were, *therefore*, fretful and waspish. *What for?* Was it because *every one* saw his associates in a bad light? How can my thinking meanly of others make *their* conversation fretful? If the Doctor had said, “*These virtuosos looked on each other*” . . . the meaning would have been clear.

213. The Pronoun *either*, which means *one of two*, is very often improperly employed. It is sometimes used to denote one of *three* or *more*, which is always incorrect. We say, “*either the dog, or the cat;*” but not “*either the dog, the cat, or the pig.*” Suppose some one to ask me which I choose to have, mutton, veal, or woodcock; I

answer *any one* of them ; and not *either* of them. Doctor Blair has used *any one* where he ought to have used *either* : “The *two words* are not altogether synonymous ; yet, in the present case, *any one* of them would have been sufficient.”

214. In concluding this Letter on the Syntax of Pronouns, I must observe that I leave many of these indeterminate Pronouns unnoticed in a particular manner. To notice every one individually could answer no purpose except that of swelling the size of a book ; a thing which I most anxiously wish to avoid.

Sometimes one cannot help using *EITHER . . . OR* with reference to one of *three* things. Expressions like the following will be found in the works of the best authors : Either the Romans, the Greeks, or the Persians. Neither the planters, the poor whites, nor the blacks.

Nearly all the grammars set down the rule that one must use *each other* with reference to *two* persons, and *one another* with reference to *more than two*. I have not, however, found a single author, good or bad, that adheres to this rule. When you are speaking of three persons, it is perhaps better to say, “They love one another,” than “They love each other ;” but sometimes these words have to be repeated so frequently that it would be very disagreeable to use always the same word. In Punch’s Address to Brother Jonathan, these words occur almost interchangeably : “Let us quarrel, American kinsmen. Let us plunge into war. We have been friends too long. We have too highly promoted *each other’s* wealth and prosperity. We are too plethoric ; we want depletion ; to which end let us cut *one another’s* throats. Let us sink *each other’s* shipping, burn *each other’s* arsenals, destroy *each other’s* property at large. Let our banks break while we smite and slay *one another*. Let us maim and mutilate *one another* ; let us make of *each other* miserable objects,” etc.—Notice that *each* has a restricting sense, and *every* an extended or general one. “He examined *each* one ; he examined *every* one.” The first means *each single one* ; the second means *them all*, in a general sense. “Here are ten lazy boys ; give *each* one a caning. Give a caning to *every* lazy boy in the school.”

That error of making verbs and pronouns agree with *each* and *every*, as if these words were plural, is as common to-day as it was in Cobbett’s time. How often we hear such expressions as,

“Everybody have their faults—Every one are dissatisfied—Let each boy and girl take up their pens,” etc. These are all wrong. Even if the noun with *each* or *every* be repeated, the verb or pronoun must be in the singular; as, “Each day and each hour *has* its duties; every man and woman *has* his or her peculiarities; every window and every house-top *was* crowded with spectators.” Because, in these instances, the predicate or verb is *understood* after the first noun: Every window was crowded and every house-top was crowded.

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## LETTER XVIII.

### SYNTAX, AS RELATING TO ADJECTIVES.

215. By this time, my dear James, you will hardly want to be reminded of the nature of Adjectives. However, it may not be amiss for you to read again attentively the whole of Letter VII.

216. Adjectives, having no relative effect, containing no representative quality, have not the dangerous power, possessed by pronouns, of throwing whole sentences into confusion, and of perverting or totally destroying the writer's meaning. For this reason, there is little to be said respecting the using of Adjectives.

217. When you make use of an Adjective in the way of comparison, take care that there be a congruity, or fitness, in the things or qualities compared. Do not say that a thing is *deeper* than it is *broad* or *long*; or that a man is *taller* than he is *wise* or *rich*. HUME says, “The principles of the Reformation were deeper in the prince's mind than to be *easily eradicated*.” This is *no comparison* at all. It is nonsense.

218. When Adjectives are used as *nouns*, they must, in all respects, be treated as nouns. “The guilty, the innocent, the rich, the poor, are mixed together.” But we cannot say “a guilty,” meaning to use the word *guilty* as a noun.

219. If two or more Adjectives be used as applicable to the same noun, there must be a comma, or commas, to separate them; as, "a poor, unfortunate man;" unless *and* or *or* be made use of, for then the comma or commas may be omitted; as, "a lofty and large and excellent house."

220. Be rather sparing than liberal in the use of Adjectives. One which expresses your meaning is better than two, which can, at best, do no more than express it, while the additional one may possibly do harm. But the error most common in the use of Adjectives is the endeavoring to strengthen the Adjective by putting an adverb before it, and which adverb conveys the notion that the quality or property expressed by the Adjective admits of degrees; as, "*very* honest, *extremely* just." A man may be *wiser* than another *wise* man; an act may be *more wicked* than another *wicked* act; but a man cannot be more *honest* than another; every man who is not *honest* must be *dishonest*; and every act which is not *just* must be *unjust*. "*Very* right," and "*very* wrong," are very common expressions, but they are both incorrect. Some expressions may be *more common* than others; but that which is *not right* is *wrong*; or that which is *not wrong* is *right*. There are here no intermediate degrees. We should laugh to hear a man say, "You are a *little* right, I am a *good deal* wrong; that person is honest in a *trifling degree*; that act was *too* just." But our ears are accustomed to the adverbs of exaggeration. Some writers deal in these to a degree that tires the ear and offends the understanding. With them, everything is *excessively* or *immensely* or *extremely* or *vastly* or *surprisingly* or *wonderfully* or *abundantly*, or the like. The notion of such writers is that these words give *strength* to what they are saying. This is a great error. Strength must be found in the *thought*, or it will never be found in the *words*. Big-sounding words, without thoughts corresponding, are effort without effect.

221. Care must be taken, too, not to use such adjectives as are improper to be applied to the nouns along with which they are used. "*Good* virtues; *bad* vices; *painful* tooth-aches; *pleasing* pleasures." These are startlingly absurd; but, amongst a select society of empty heads, "*moderate* Reform" has long been a fashionable expression; an expression which has been well criticised by asking the gentlemen who use it how they would like to obtain *moderate justice* in a court of law, or to meet with *moderate chastity* in a wife.

222. To secure yourself against the risk of committing such errors, you have only to take care to ascertain the full meaning of every word you employ.

To show you how easy our English is, in this part of its grammar, as compared with other languages, I shall ask you to look at this one little sentence: "The good boy loves a good book and a good friend; to good bread and butter he gives not a thought." Here the adjective *good* occurs four times without ever once changing its form; now you will see that this little word, in this one little sentence, changes *five* different times in German: Der gute Knabe liebt ein gutes Buch und einen guten Freund; gutem Brod und guter Butter gibt er keinen Gedanken. What do you think of that, my lad? Would you not think that the poor German, when he speaks, would be constantly thinking of his genders, numbers, and cases? Would you not think he would be apt to get things mixed? But he doesn't; he speaks his language in correct form, as naturally as a canary-bird sings in correct tune; for he has learned to speak as the canary has learned to sing.

This is why some writers, like Mr. Grant White, say that the English language has *no* grammar; that is, because its words have few or no declensions, or changes to indicate person, number, gender, case, mood, and tense. It has, however, a grammar of its own; and the proof of it is this: Notwithstanding the fact that it has so few declensions, as compared with German, it is just as hard, if not harder, for an adult German to learn to speak and write our English in a perfectly correct and idiomatic manner, as it is for an adult American or Briton to learn to speak and write German in a similar manner. Of the two or three millions of native Germans who are now in the United States, how many of



them, do you think, are able to speak our English in such a manner as to have their words taken down on the spot, and printed just as spoken? I do not think there are half a dozen; I know of but one; and that is Mr. CARL SCHURZ. When I say *native* Germans, I mean, of course, those who, like him, have come to this country and learned the language after attaining manhood. Those who come here in infancy, or in childhood, become, in fact, Americans. Of the others, not one in ten thousand ever learns to speak like a native. As an offset to Mr. Schurz, we have at least one American who may be said to have spoken and written German as perfectly as Mr. Schurz speaks and writes English; and that is our lamented BAYARD TAYLOR.

It is very easy to learn enough English to talk about one's daily wants; to ask for meat and drink; to count money; to buy and sell; and to inquire one's way; it is far easier for a German to learn this much in English than for an American to learn as much in German; but it is, I think, as hard for the German to *master* the English as it is for the Englishman to *master* the German. The German language, in utterance and in construction, is, like the people who speak it, almost as regular, formal, and law-conforming as mathematics; while our English, in utterance and in construction, is, like the typical Englishman, though grounded in law and principle, essentially a mass of peculiarities, irregularities, and eccentricities.

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## LETTER XIX.

### SYNTAX, AS RELATING TO VERBS.

223. Let us, my dear James, get well through this Letter; and then we may, I think, safely say that we know something of grammar: a little more, I hope, than is known by the greater part of those who call themselves Latin and Greek scholars, and who dignify their having studied these languages with the name of "*Liberal Education*."

224. There can be no sentence, there can be no sense in words, unless there be a *Verb* either expressed or understood. Each of the other Parts of Speech may alter-

nately be dispensed with; but the Verb never can. The Verb being, then, of so much importance, you will do well to read again, before you proceed further, paragraphs 23, 24, 25, and 26, in Letter III, and the whole of Letter VIII.

225. Well, then, we have now to see how Verbs are used in sentences, and how a misuse of them affects the meaning of the writer. There must, you will bear in mind, always be a Verb expressed or understood. One would think that this was not the case in the direction written on a post letter. "To John Goldsmith, Esq., Hambledon, Hampshire." But what do these words really mean? Why, they mean, "*This letter is to be delivered to John Goldsmith, who is an Esquire, who lives at Hambledon, which is in Hampshire.*" Thus, there are no less than five Verbs where we thought there was no Verb at all. "Sir, I beg you to give me a bit of bread." The sentence which follows the *Sir* is complete; but the *Sir* appears to stand wholly without connection. However, the full meaning is this: "I beg you, who *are* a Sir, to give me a bit of bread." "What, John?" That is to say, "What *is* said by you, whose name *is* John?" Again, in the date of a letter; "Long Island, March 25, 1818." That is: "*I am now writing in Long Island; this is the twenty-fifth day of March, and this month is in the one thousand eight hundred and eighteenth year of the Christian era.*"

226. Now, if you take time to reflect a little on this matter, you will never be puzzled for a moment by those detached words, to suit which grammarians have invented *vocative cases* and *cases absolute*, and a great many other appellations, with which they puzzle themselves, and confuse and bewilder and torment those who read their books. (See paragraph 191.)

227. We *almost always*, whether in speaking or in writing, leave out some of the words which are necessary to a

*full expression* of our meaning. This leaving out is called the *Ellipsis*. *Ellipsis* is, in geometry, an *oval* figure; and the compasses, in the tracing of the line of this figure, do not take their full sweep all round, as in the tracing of a *circle*, but they make *skips* and *leave out* parts of the area, or surface, which parts would be included in the circle. Hence it is, that the *skipping over*, or *leaving out*, in speaking or in writing, is called *het Ellipsis*; without making use of which, we, as you will presently see, scarcely ever open our lips or move our pens. "He told me that he had given John the gun which the gunsmith brought the other night." That is: "He told *to* me that he had given *to* John the gun, which the gunsmith brought *to this place*, or hither, *on* the other night." This would, you see, be very cumbrous and disagreeable; and, therefore, seeing that the *meaning* is quite clear without the words marked by italics, we *leave these words out*. But we may easily go too far in this elliptical way, and say: "He told me he had given John the gun the gunsmith brought the other night." This is leaving the sentence too bare, and making it to be, if not nonsense, hardly sense.

228. Reserving some further remarks, to be made by-and-by, on the *Ellipsis*, I have now to desire that, always, when you are examining a sentence, you will take into your view the words that are *left out*. If you have any doubt as to the correctness of the sentence, fill it up by putting in the left-out words, and, if there be an error you will soon discover it.

229. Keeping in mind these remarks on the subject of *understood words*, you will now listen attentively to me, while I endeavor to explain to you the manner in which *Verbs* ought to be used in sentences.

230. The first thing is to come at a clear understanding with regard to the *cases* of nouns and pronouns as connected, in use, with *Verbs* and *prepositions*; for on this

connection depends a great deal. Verbs *govern*, as it is called, nouns and pronouns; that is to say, they sometimes cause, or make, nouns or pronouns to be in a certain case. *Nouns* do not vary their endings to denote different cases; but *pronouns* do; as you have seen in Letter VI. Therefore, to illustrate this matter, I will take the pronoun personal of the third person singular, which in the nominative case is *he*, possessive case *his*, objective case *him*.

231. When *a man* (it is the same with regard to any other person or thing) is the *actor*, or *doer*, the *man* is in the nominative case, and the corresponding pronoun is *he*; "*He strikes.*" The same case exists when the man is the *receiver* or *endurer*, of an action. "*He is stricken.*" It is still the same case when the man is said *to be* in any state or condition. "*He is unhappy.*" Indeed, there is no difference in these two latter instances; for "*he is stricken*" is no other than to say that "*he is in a state or condition called stricken.*" Observe, too, that in these two latter instances, the *he* is followed by the Verb *to be*: *he is stricken*, *he is unhappy*; and observe, moreover, that whenever the Verb *to be* is used, the *receiver*, or *be-er* (if I may make a word) is, and must be, in the *nominative case*. But now let me stop a little to guard you against a puzzle. I say, "*the Verb to be*;" but I do not mean *those two words* always. When I say the Verb *to be*, I may mean, as in the above examples, *is*. This is the Verb *to be* in the third person singular. "*I write.*" I should say that here is the pronoun *I* and the Verb *to write*; that is to say, it is the Verb *to write* in one of its forms. The *to* is the sign of the infinitive mode; and the Verb in that state is the root, or the foundation, from which all the different parts or forms proceed. Having guarded ourselves against this puzzler, let us come back to our nominative case. The *actor*, the *doer*, the *receiver of an action*, the *be-er*, must always be in the nominative case;

and it is called nominative case because it is that state, or situation, or case, in which the person or thing is *named* without being pointed out as the *object*, or *end*, of any foregoing action or purpose; as, "*he* strikes; *he* is stricken; *he* is unhappy." This word *nominative* is not a good word; *acting and being* case, would be much better. This word *nominative*, like most of the terms used in teaching grammar, has been taken from the Latin. It is bad; it is inadequate to its intended purpose; but it is *used*; and if we understand its meaning, or, rather, what it is designed to mean, its intrinsic insufficiency is of no consequence. Thus, I hope, then, that we know what the *nominative* is. "He writes; he sings; he is sick; he is well; he is smitten; he is good;" and so on, always with a *he*.

232. But (and now pay attention) if the *action* pass from the *actor* to a *person or thing acted upon*, and if there be no part of the Verb *to be* employed, then the person or thing acted upon is in the *objective* case; as, "He smites *him*; he strikes *him*; he kills *him*." In these instances we wish to show, not only an action that is performed and the person who performs it, but also the person *upon whom* it is performed. Here, therefore, we state the *actor*, the *action*, and the *object*; and the person or thing which is the object, is in the *objective case*. The Verb is said, in such instances, *to govern* the noun or pronoun; that is to say, to make it, or force it, to be in the objective case; and to make us use *him* instead of *he*.

This is simply another way of saying that the transitive verb puts the noun or pronoun which follows it in the objective case, and that a sentence with a transitive verb must consist of *subject*, *predicate*, and *object*; as, Garfield defeated Hancock. (See par. 48.)

233. However, I remember that I was very much puzzled on account of these cases. I saw that when "Peter was *smitten*," Peter was in the *nominative case*; but that when any person or thing "*had smitten* Peter," Peter was

in the *objective case*. This puzzled me much; and the loose and imperfect definitions of my grammar-book yielded me no clue to a disentanglement. Reflection on the *reason* for this apparent inconsistency soon taught me, however, that, in the first of these cases, Peter is merely *named*, or *nominated* as the *receiver* of an action; and that, in the latter instance, Peter is mentioned as the *object* of the action of *some other person* or thing, expressed or understood. I perceived that, in the first instance, "*Peter is smitten*," I had a complete sense. I was informed as to the person who had received an action, and also as to what sort of action he had received. And I perceived that, in the second instance, "*John has smitten Peter*," there was an actor who took possession of the use of the Verb, and made Peter the object of it; and that this actor, *John*, now took the *nominative*, and put Peter in the objective case.

234. This puzzle was, however, hardly got over when another presented itself: for I conceived the notion that Peter was in the nominative *only because no actor was mentioned at all in the sentence*; but I soon discovered this to be an error; for I found that "*Peter is smitten by John*," still left Peter *in the nominative*; and that, if I used the pronoun, I must say, "*he is smitten by John*;" and not "*him is smitten by John*."

235. Upon this puzzle I dwelt a long time: a whole week, at least. For I was not content unless I could reconcile everything to *reason*; and I could see no reason for this. Peter, in this last instance, appeared to be the *object*, and there was the actor, John. My ear, indeed, assured me that it was right to say, "*He is smitten by John*;" but my reason doubted the information and assurances of my ear.

236. At last, the little insignificant word *by* attracted my attention. This word, in this place, is a *preposition*. Ah! that is it! prepositions *govern* nouns and pronouns;

that is to say, *make them to be in the objective case!* So that John, who had plagued me so much, I found to be in the objective case; and I found that, if I put him out, and put the pronoun in his place, I must say, "Peter is smitten *by him*."

237. Now, then, my dear James, do you clearly understand this? If you do not, have patience. Read and think, and weigh well every part of what I have here written: for, as you will immediately see, a clear understanding with regard to the *cases* is one of the main inlets to a perfect knowledge of grammar.

As soon as a verb is changed from the active-transitive to the passive voice, the *subject* becomes the *object* of the sentence; as, "She loves him," active; "She is loved by him," passive.

Be careful to observe the difference between the *object* and the *attribute*. I remember I could not, for a long time, see the difference in such sentences as these: "He is a Jew. She loves a Jew." I thought that "a Jew" was, in both instances, the object of the verb; but it is not. When I came to learn German, I saw the difference at once, and the matter became clear to me. *Er ist ein Jude. Sie liebt einen Juden.* You see that "loves" is a *transitive* verb, whereas "is" is a neuter, or intransitive one. The objective case follows a *transitive* verb, never a *neuter* or *intransitive* one. What follows the neuter verb, therefore, or any verb *naming* or *nominating* anybody, is not the object, not anything in the objective case; but the *attribute*—so called because it generally *attributes* something to somebody—and, if a noun, is always in the nominative case. "He is *a man*; he is *manly*; he stands *a freeman*; he remains *a prince*; he seems *poor*; he appears *wealthy*; he looks *handsome*; he is called *The Great Unknown*; he is appointed *judge*; he is elected *governor*"—in all these cases, what follows the verb is an attribute or quality, and, wherever it is a noun, it is in the nominative case. Remember, therefore, that nouns following such verbs as *be, become, seem, appear, stand, walk*, and the passive verbs *is called, is named, is styled, is appointed, is elected, is made*, are always in the nominative case, and are termed the *attribute*, or, by some grammarians, the *complement*, of the sentence.

238. Verbs, of which there must be one, at least, expressed or understood, in every sentence, must *agree* in

*person* and in *number* with the nouns or pronouns which are the *nominatives* of the sentence; that is to say, the Verbs must be of the same person and same number as the nominatives are. Verbs frequently change their forms and endings to make themselves *agree* with the *nominatives*. How necessary it is, then, to know what is, and what is not, a nominative in a sentence! Let us take an example. "John smite Peter." What are these words? *John* is a noun, *third person*, singular number, nominative case. *Smite* is a Verb, *first person*, singular number. *Peter* is a noun, third person, singular number, objective case. Therefore, the sentence is incorrect; for the *nominative*, *John*, is in the *third* person, and the Verb is in the *first*; while both ought to be in the *same person*. The sentence ought to be, "John *smites* Peter;" and not "John *smite* Peter."

239. This is, to be sure, a very glaring error; but still it is no more than an error, and is, in fact, as excusable as any other grammatical error. "The men lives in the country." Here the Verb *lives* is in the *singular* number, and the noun *men*, which is the nominative, is in the *plural* number. "The men *live* in the country," it ought to be. These errors stare us in the face. But when the sentences become longer, and embrace several nominatives and Verbs, we do not so readily perceive the errors that are committed. "The intention of the act of Parliament, and not its several penalties, *decide* the character of the corrupt assembly by whom it was passed." Here the noun *penalties* comes so near to the Verb *decide* that the ear deceives the judgment. But the noun *intention* is the nominative to the Verb, which therefore ought to be *decides*. Let us take a sentence still more deceiving. "Without the aid of a fraudulent paper-money, the tyrants never could have performed any of those deeds by which their safety *have been* endangered, and which *have*, at the same time, made them detested." *Deeds* is the nomina-



tive to the last *have* and its principal Verb; but *safety* is the nominative to the first *have*; and therefore this first *have* ought to have been *has*. You see that the error arises from our having the plural noun *deeds* in our eye and ear. Take all the rest of the sentence away, and leave “*safety have been*” standing by itself, and then the error is as flagrant as “*John smite Peter*.” Watch me now, in the next sentence. “It must be observed that land fell greatly in price as soon as the cheats began to draw in their paper-money. In such cases the quantity and quality of the land is the same as it was before; but the price is reduced all of a sudden, by a change in the value and power of the money, which becomes very different from what it was.” Here are two complete sentences, which go very glibly off the tongue. There is nothing in them that offends the ear. The first is, indeed, correct; but the last is a mass of error. *Quantity and quality*, which are the *nominatives* in the first member of the sentence, make, together, a *plural*, and should have been followed, after the word *land*, by *are* and not by *is*; and the *it was*, which followed, should, of course, have been *they were*. In the second member of the sentence, *value and power* are the *nominatives* of *becomes*, which, therefore, should have been *become*; and then, again, there follows an *it was*, instead of *they were*. We are misled, in such cases, by the nearness of the singular noun, which comes in between the *nominatives* and the Verbs. We should not be likely to say, “*Quantity and quality is; value and power becomes*.” But when a singular noun comes in between such *nominatives* and the Verbs, we are very apt to be thinking of that noun, and to commit error. When we once begin, we keep on; and if the sentence be long, we get together, at last, a fine collection of Verbs and pronouns, making as complete nonsense as heart can wish. Judge Blackstone, in the 4th Book, Chapter 33, says, “The very *scheme and model*

of the administration of common justice, between party and party, *was* entirely settled by this king; and *has* continued nearly the same to this day." *Administration of common justice* was full upon the judge's ear; down he clapped *was*; and *has* naturally followed; and thus, my dear son, in grammar as in moral conduct, one fault almost necessarily produces others.

240. Look, therefore, at your *nominative*, before you put a *Verb* upon paper; for, you see, it may be *one word*, or *two* or *more words*. But observe, if there be two or more singular nouns or pronouns, separated by *or*, which, you know, is a *disjoining* conjunction; then, the Verb must be in the singular; as, "A soldier, *or* a sailor, who *has* served his country faithfully, *is* fairly entitled to a pension; but who will say that a prostituted peer, a pimp, *or* a buffoon, *merits* a similar provision from the public?"

241. It sometimes happens that there are, in the *nominative*, two or more nouns, or pronouns, and that they are in *different numbers*, or in *different persons*; as, "*The minister or the borough-tyrants.*" These nouns cannot have the Verb to *agree* with them *both*. Therefore if it be the conspiring of these wretches against the liberties of the people, of which we have to speak, we cannot say, "The minister or the borough-tyrants *conspire*;" because the Verb would not then *agree* in number with the noun *minister*; nor can we say *conspires*; because the Verb would not agree with the noun *borough-tyrants*. Therefore, we must not write such sentences; we must say, "The minister *conspires*, or the borough-tyrants *conspire*, against the liberties of the people." Repetition is sometimes disagreeable to the ear; but it is better to repeat, be it ever so often, than to write bad grammar, which is only another term for nonsense.

242. When *nominatives* are separated by *nor*, the rule of *or* must be followed. "Neither man *nor* beast *is* safe in such weather;" and not *are* safe. And if *nominatives*

of different numbers present themselves, we must not give them a Verb which *disagrees* with either the one or the other. We must not say: "Neither the halter *nor* the bayonets *are* sufficient to prevent us from obtaining our rights." We must avoid this bad grammar by using a different form of words; as, "We are to be prevented from obtaining our rights by neither the halter nor the bayonets." And why should we *wish* to write bad grammar, if we can express our meaning in good grammar?

243. If *or* or *nor* disjoin nouns and pronouns of different *persons*, these nouns and pronouns, though they be all of the same *number*, cannot be the nominative of one and the same Verb. We cannot say, "They or I *am* in fault; I, or they, or he, *is* the author of it; George or I *am* the person." Mr. Lindley Murray says that we *may* use these phrases; and that we have only to take care that the Verb agrees with that person which is *placed nearest* to it; but he says, also, that it would be *better* to avoid such phrases by giving a different turn to our words. I do not like to leave anything to chance or to discretion when we have a clear principle for our guide. Fill up the sentences, and you will see what pretty work there is. "They *am* in fault, or I *am* in fault; I *is* the author, or they *is* the author, or he *is* the author; George *am* the person, or I *am* the person." Mr. Murray gives a similar latitude as to the Verbs used with a mixture of plurals and singulars, as mentioned in the foregoing paragraph. The truth, I suspect, is, that Mr. Murray, observing that great writers frequently committed these errors, thought it prudent to give up the cause of grammar, rather than seem to set himself against such formidable authority. But if we follow this course, it is pretty clear that we shall very soon be left with no principle and no rule of grammar.

The grammarians declare that you may say, "Either he or I *am* the guilty one;" or, "He *is* the guilty one, or I *am*;" "You or

William is to go;" or, "You are to go, or William is." The eye or the ear often decides which is best. "You must not tell us what *you* or *anybody* else *thinks*," seems more compact than "You must not tell us what *you think*, or what *anybody* else *thinks*." If one of the nominatives be negatively used, the verb must be in the singular. Thus, "He, and not I, is chosen;" "I, and not they, am to go." These are, indeed, correct; and yet I think it is better to say, He is chosen, and not I; I am to go, and not they. I beg you to notice how frequently and nicely Cobbett uses the subjunctive *be* after *if* and *though*, which is correct, and which now, unfortunately, is falling out of use among common writers.

244. The nominative is frequently a noun of *multitude*; as, *mob*, *parliament*, *gang*. Now, where this is the case, the Verb is used in the singular or in the plural, upon precisely the same principles that the pronouns are so used; and as these principles, together with ample illustrations by the way of example, have been given you in Letter XVII, paragraph 181, I need say nothing more of the matter. I will just observe, however, that *consistency*, in the use of the Verb, in such cases, is the main thing to keep in view. We may say, "The gang of borough-tyrants *is* cruel;" or, "that the gang of borough-tyrants *are* cruel;" but if we go on to speak of their notoriously brutal ignorance, we must not say, "The gang of borough-tyrants *is* cruel, and *are* also notoriously as ignorant as brutes." We must use *is* in both places, or *are* in both places.

245. In looking for the nominative of a sentence, take care that the *relative pronoun* be not a stumbling-block, for relatives have no changes to denote *number* or *person*; and though they may sometimes appear to be of themselves nominatives, they never can be such. "The men *who are* here, the man *who is* here; the cocks *that crow*, the cock *that crows*." Now, if the relative be the nominative, why do the Verbs *change*, seeing that here is *no change in the relative*? No: the Verb, in pursuit of its nominative, runs through the relatives to come at their

antecedents, *men, man, cocks, cock*. Bishop Lowth says, however, that “the relative is the nominative when no other nominative comes between it and the Verb;” and Mr. Murray has very faithfully copied this erroneous observation. “*Who is* in the house? *Who are* in the house? *Who strikes* the iron? *Who strike* the iron? *Who was* in the street? *Who were* in the street?” Now, here is, in all these instances, no other nominative between the relative and the Verb; and yet the Verb is continually varying. Why does it vary? Because it disregards the relative and goes and finds the antecedent, and accommodates its number to that antecedent. The antecedents are, in these instances, understood: “What *person is* in the house? What *persons are* in the house? What *person strikes* the iron? What *persons strike* the iron? What *person was* in the street? What *persons were* in the street?” The Bishop seems to have had a misgiving in his mind, when he gave this account of the nominative functions of the *relative*; for he adds, “the relative is of the *same person* as the antecedent; and the Verb *agrees with it* accordingly.” Oh! oh! but the relative is *always the same*, and is of *any* and of *every number* and *person*. How then can the Verb, when it makes *its changes* in number and person, be said to *agree* with the relative? Disagree, indeed, with the relative the Verb cannot any more than it can with a preposition; for the relative has, like the preposition, no changes to denote cases; but the danger is that in certain instances the relative may be *taken for a nominative*, without your looking after the antecedent, which is the real nominative, and that thus, not having the number and person of the antecedent clearly in your mind, you may give to the Verb a wrong number or person. It is very seldom that those who lay down erroneous rules furnish us with examples by the means of which we are enabled to detect the error of these rules; yet, Mr. Murray has, in the present case,

done this most amply. For in another part of his book he has these two examples: "I am the general *who give* the orders to-day. I am the general *who gives* the orders to-day." Here the antecedent as well as the relative are precisely the same; the order of the words is the same; and yet the words are different. *Why?* Because, in the first example, the pronoun *I* is the nominative, and in the second, the noun *general*. The first means, "*I*, who am the general here, *give* the orders to-day." The second means, "The general *who gives* the orders to-day is *I*." Nothing can more clearly show that the relative cannot be the nominative, and that to consider it as a nominative must lead to error and confusion. You will observe, therefore, that when *I*, in the Etymology and Syntax as relating to relative pronouns, speak of relatives *as being in the nominative case*, I mean that they relate to nouns or to personal pronouns which are in that case. The same observation applies to the other cases.

I am strongly inclined to think that Cobbett is in error here. The relative pronoun must have person, number, gender, and case, like any other pronoun; and *who* is undoubtedly always of the same person and number as the word to which it relates. Let us put it directly after all the three persons, singular and plural:

It is I who speak,	or It is I who am speaking.
It is thou who speakest,	" It is thou who art speaking.
It is he who speaks,	" It is he who is speaking.
It is we who speak,	" It is we who are speaking.
It is you who speak,	" It is you who are speaking.
It is they who speak,	" It is they who are speaking.

Now here each *who* is of the same person as the pronoun or word to which it relates, and consequently the verb agrees with it. Strangely enough, the relative pronoun may, as Cobbett says, be of any person; but that does not prevent it from agreeing with its antecedent. I used to think that *who* was always of the *third* person, referring always to somebody spoken of; but now I see that it may be of the *first* person, referring to somebody who is speaking. Nevertheless, we do sometimes hear, It is I who speaks German; it is you who speaks Spanish; it is you that speaks

French. This may be explained by supposing that the full meaning of the words is: It is I who am the person that speaks German; it is you who are the person that speaks Spanish. And here again each *who* is of the same person as the antecedent.

246. We are sometimes embarrassed to fix precisely on the nominative, when a sort of *addition* is made to it by words expressing persons or things that accompany it; as, "The Tyrant, with the Spy, *have* brought Peter to the block." We hesitate to determine whether the *Tyrant* alone is in the nominative, or whether the nominative includes the Spy; and of course we hesitate which to employ, the *singular* or the *plural* Verb; that is to say, *has* or *have*. The meaning must be our guide. If we mean that the act has been *done* by the Tyrant *himself*, and that the Spy has been a mere *involuntary* agent, then we ought to use the singular; but if we believe that the Spy has been a *co-operator*; an *associate*; an *accomplice*; then we must use the plural of the Verb. "The Tyrant with his Proclamation *has* produced great oppression and flagrant violations of law." *Has*, by all means, in this case; because the proclamation is a mere instrument. Give the sentence a turn: "The Tyrant *has* produced great oppression and flagrant violations of the law with his proclamation." This is good; but "the Tyrant *has* brought Peter to the block with the Spy," is bad; it sounds badly; and it is bad sense. It does not say what we mean it should say. "A leg of mutton, with turnips and carrots, *is* very good." If we mean to say that a leg of mutton when cooked with these vegetables, is good, we must use *is*; but if we be speaking of the goodness of a leg of mutton *and* these vegetables taken together, we must use *are*. When *with* means *along with*, *together with*, in *company with*, and the like, it is nearly the same as *and*; and then the plural Verb must be used. "*He*, with his bare hand, *takes* up hot iron." Not, "he, with his bare hand, *take* up." "He, with his brothers, *are*

able to do much." Not, "is able to do much." If the pronoun be used instead of *brothers*, it will be in the objective case: "He, with *them*, are able to do much." But this is no impediment to the including of the noun (represented by *them*) in the nominative. *With*, which is a preposition, takes the objective case after it; but if the persons or things represented by the words coming after the preposition form part of the actors in a sentence, the understood nouns make part of the nominatives. "The bag, with the guineas and dollars in it, *were* stolen." For if we say *was* stolen, it is *possible* for us to mean that the *bag only* was stolen. "Sobriety, with great *industry and talent*, *enable* a man to perform great deeds." And not *enables*; for *sobriety alone* would not enable a man to do great things. "The borough-tyranny, with the paper-money makers, *have* produced misery and starvation." And not *has*; for we mean that the two have *co-operated*. "Zeal, with discretion, *do* much;" and not, *does* much; for we mean, on the contrary, that it *does nothing*. It is the meaning that must determine which of the numbers we ought, in all such cases, to employ.

The grammarians are now unanimous in declaring that a phrase beginning with the preposition *with*, coming directly after the subject, does *not* affect the verb, or predicate; as, The vessel, with her crew, *was* lost; the regiment, with its officers, *was* captured; the house, with its contents, *has* been sold; the minister, with his cabinet, *has* resigned; the emperor, with his family, *has* been assassinated; Cobbett, with his Grammar, *has* done much good. Therefore, it is correct to say, The tyrant, with the spy, *has* brought Peter to the block; he, with his brothers, *has* done much; the bag, with the guineas and dollars in it, *was* stolen; zeal, with discretion, *does* much. Because, in these instances, "with the spy" and "with his brothers" indicate, like the phrase *with his proclamation*, merely instruments; and the sentence about the bag of money means simply that the bag was stolen with what it contained. The sentence about sobriety means that this virtue, employed or combined with other qualities, enables a man to



perform great deeds; and that about zeal with discretion must be regarded in the same way. Besides, the preposition *with* puts the *spy* and the *brothers*, the *guineas* and the *dollars*, the *industry* and the *talent*, in the objective case; and how can any thing in the *objective* case be the *subject*, which is always in the *nomi-native* case? What Cobbett says about the sentence, "He, with his brothers, are able to do much," is about as good an example of sophistry as any thing I know. For an expression of this kind, see Cobbett's account of the sand-hill as an educator, *Life*, page 261.

The same is the case with sentences in which the phrase *as well as* occurs. Clay, as well as Webster, *was* a great orator; Charles, as well as his brother, *was* successful in business; the father, as well as his son, *is* in fault; the minutest insect, as well as the largest quadruped, *derives* its life from the same Omnipotent Source.

247. The Verb *to be* sometimes comes between two nouns of different numbers. "The great evil *is* the borough-debt." In this sentence there is nothing to embarrass us; because *evil* and *borough-debt* are both in the singular. But, "the great evil *is* the *taxes*," is not so clear of embarrassment. The embarrassment is the same, when there is a singular noun on one side, and two or more singulars or plurals on the other side; as, "The curse of the country *is* the profligacy, the rapacity, the corruption of the law-makers, the base subserviency of the administrators of the law, and the frauds of the makers of paper-money." Now, we mean, here, that these things *constitute*, or *form*, or *make up*, a curse. We mean that the curse *consists* of these things; and if we *said* this, there would be no puzzling. "The evil *is* the taxes." That is, the taxes constitute the evil; but we cannot say, "the evil *are* the taxes;" nor can we say, that the "curse *are* these things." Avoid, then, the use of the Verb *to be* in all such cases. Say, the curse of the country consists of, or arises *from*, or is produced *by*. Dr. BLAIR, in his 19th Lecture, says: "A feeble, a harsh, or an obscure style, *are* always faults." The *or* required the singular Verb *is*; but *faults* required *are*. If he had put *is* and *faulty*, there would have been no doubt of his being

correct. But as the sentence now stands, there is great room for doubt, and, that, too, as to more than one point; for fault means *defect*, and a style, which is a *whole*, cannot well be called a *defect*, which mean a want of goodness in *a part*. Feebleness, harshness, obscurity, are *faulty*. But to call the style itself, to call the *whole thing* a *fault*, is more than the Doctor meant. The style may be *faulty*, and yet it may not be a fault. The Doctor's work is *faulty*; but, surely, the work is not a *fault*!

248. Lest you should be, in certain instances, puzzled to find your nominative case, which, as you now see, constitutes the main spring and regulator of every sentence, I will here point out to you some instances wherein there is used, apparently, neither Verb nor nominative. "*In general* I dislike to drink wine." This *in general* is no more, in fact, than *one word*. It means *generally*. But sometimes there is a Verb comes in: "generally speaking." Thus: "The borough-tyrants, *generally speaking*, are great fools as well as rogues." That is to say, "when *we* speak generally;" or, "if *we* are speaking generally;" or, "when *men* or *people* speak generally." For observe that there *never can be* a sentence without a Verb, expressed or understood, and that there *never can be* a Verb without a nominative case, expressed or understood.

249. Sometimes not only two or more nouns, or pronouns, may be the nominative of a sentence, but *many other words* along with them may assist in making a nominative; as, "Pitt, Rose, Steele, and their associates, giving to Walter a sum of the public money, as a reward for libelling the sons of the king, *was* extremely profligate and base." That is to say, this *act* of Pitt and his associates *was* extremely profligate and base. It is, when you come to inquire, the *act* which is the nominative, and all the other words only go to describe the origin and end of the act.

I doubt very much whether this sentence be correct. Following Cobbett's own instructions, let us shorten the sentence, and see how it will look then: "Pitt giving Walter a sum of money was extremely base." I think this neither looks nor sounds correct. It was *his* act, *Pitt's* act, which was base; and therefore it should be, "Pitt's giving Walter a sum of money was extremely base;" that is to say, Pitt's acting was base; for we cannot say, Pitt acting was base. We say, "Bacon's drawing up charges against Essex was extremely base; John Chinaman's working for low wages is the head and front of his offense;" and not, Bacon drawing up, etc.—By-the-bye, such sentences as, "The great evil is the taxes," are perfectly correct; for the subject is "the evil," which is singular, and it makes little matter what the attribute may be, for it has nothing to do with the verb. It is precisely the same form of expression which we use when we say, It is we; it is you; it is they; it is the boys; it is the rich; it is the wicked; it is the Italians; and so on.

250. You must take care that there be a nominative, and that it be clearly expressed or understood. "The Attorney-General Gibbs, whose malignity induced him to be extremely violent, and *was* listened to by the Judges." The first Verb *induced* has a nominative, namely, the *malignity* of the Attorney-General Gibbs; but the *was* has no nominative, either expressed or clearly understood; and we cannot, therefore, tell what or who it was that was listened to; whether the *malignity* of Gibbs, or *Gibbs himself*. It should have been, and *who*, or, and *he*, was listened to; and then we should have known that it was Gibbs himself that was listened to. The omitting of the nominative, five hundred instances of which I could draw from Judge BLACKSTONE and Doctor JOHNSON, arises very often from a desire to avoid a repetition of the noun or pronouns; but repetition is always to be preferred before obscurity.

251. Now, my dear James, I hope that I have explained to you, sufficiently, not only *what the nominative is*, but what are its powers in every sentence, and that I have imprinted deeply on your mind the necessity of keeping

the nominative constantly in your eye. For want of doing this, Judge BLACKSTONE has, in Book IV, Chap. 17, committed some most ludicrous errors. "Our ancient Saxon *laws* nominally punished theft with death, if above the value of twelve-pence; but the criminal was permitted to redeem *his* life by a pecuniary ransom; as among *their* German *ancestors*." What confusion is here? Whose ancestors? *Theirs*. Who are *they*? Why the *criminal*. *Theirs*, if it relate to anything, must relate to *laws*; and then the *laws* have *ancestors*. Then, *what* is it that was to be of above the value of twelve-pence? The *death*, or the *theft*? By, "*if above the value of twelve-pence*," the Judge, without doubt, meant, "*if the thing stolen were above the value of twelve-pence*;" but he says no such thing; and the meaning of the words is, if *the death* were above the value of twelve-pence. The sentence should have stood thus: "Our ancient Saxon laws nominally punished theft with death, if the thing stolen were above the value of twelve-pence; but the criminals were permitted to redeem their lives by a pecuniary ransom; as among their German ancestors." I could quote, from the same author, hundreds of examples of similar errors; but were there only this one to be found in a work which is composed of matter which was read, in the way of Lectures, by a professor of law, to students in the University of Oxford, even this one ought to be sufficient to convince you of the importance of attending to the precepts which I have given you relative to this part of our subject.

252. As to the *objective case*, it has nothing to do with *Verbs*; because a noun which is not in the nominative must be in the *objective*; and because Verbs do never vary their endings to make themselves *agree* with the objective. This case has been sufficiently explained under the head of *personal pronouns*, which have endings to denote it.

253. The *possessive case*, likewise, has nothing to do

with Verbs, only you must take care that you do not, in any instance, look upon it as a nominative. "The quality of the apples *were* good." No; it must be *was*; for *quality* is the nominative and *apples* the possessive. "The want of learning, talent, and sense *are* more visible in the two houses of Parliament than in any other part of the nation." Take care upon all such occasions. Such sentences are, as to grammatical construction, very deceiving. It should be "*is* more visible;" for *want* is the nominative; and *learning, talent, and sense* are in the possessive. The want of *learning*, and so on.

254. You now know all about the *person* and *number* of Verbs. You know the reasons upon which are founded their variations with regard to these two circumstances. Look, now, at the *conjugation* in Letter VIII, paragraph 98; and you will see that there remain the *Times* and *Modes* to be considered.

255. Of *Times* there is very little to be said here. All the fanciful distinctions of *perfect present, more past, and more perfect past*, and numerous others, only tend to bewilder, confuse, and disgust the learner. There can be but *three* times, the *present*, the *past*, the *future*; and, for the expressing of these, our language provides us with words and terminations the most suitable that can possibly be conceived. In some languages, which contain no little words such as our signs, *will, shall, may*, and so on, the Verbs themselves change their form in order to express what we express by the help of these signs. In French, for instance, there are *two past times*. I will give you an example in order to explain this matter. "The working men, every day, *gave* money to the tyrants, who, in return, *gave* the working men dungeons and axes." Now here is our word *gave*, which is the past time of the Verb *to give*. It is the same word, you see, in both instances; but you will see it different in the French. "Tous les jours, les ouvriers *donnaient* de

l'argent aux tyrants, qui, en retour, *donnèrent* aux ouvriers des cachots et des haches." You see that, in one place, our *give* is translated by *donnaient*, and in the other place, by *donnèrent*. One of these is called, in French, the *past imperfect*, and the other the *past perfect*. This distinction is necessary in the French; but similar distinctions are wholly unnecessary in English.

256. In the Latin language, the Verbs change their endings so as to include in the Verbs themselves what we express by our auxiliary Verb *to have*. And they have as many changes, or different endings, as are required to express all those various circumstances of time which we express by *work, worked, shall work, may work, might work, have worked, had worked, shall have worked, may have worked, might have worked*, and so on. It is, therefore, necessary for the Latins to have distinct appellations to suit these various circumstances of time, or states of an action; but such distinction of appellations can be of no use to us, whose Verbs never vary their endings to express time, except the single variation from the *present* to the *past*; for, even as to the *future*, the *signs* answer our purpose. In our compound times, that is to say, such as *I have worked*, there is the Verb *to have*, which becomes *had*, or *shall have*, and so on.

257. Why, then, should we perplex ourselves with a multitude of artificial distinctions, which cannot, by any possibility, be of any use in practice? These distinctions have been introduced from this cause: those who have written English Grammars have been taught Latin; and either unable to divest themselves of their Latin rules, or unwilling to treat with simplicity that which, if made somewhat of a mystery, would make them appear more *learned* than the mass of people, they have endeavored to make our simple language turn and twist itself so as to become as complex in its principles as the Latin language is.

258. There are, however, some few remarks to be made with regard to the *times* of Verbs; but before I make them, I must speak of the *participles*. Just cast your eye again on Letter VIII, paragraphs 97 and 102. Look at the conjugations of the Verbs *to work*, *to have*, and *to be*, in that same Letter. These *participles*, you see, with the help of *to have* and *to be*, form our *compound times*. I need not tell you that *I was working* means the same as *I worked*, only that the former supposes that something else was going on at the same time, or that something happened at the time I was working, or that, at least, there is some circumstance of action or of existence *collateral with my working*; as, “*I was working when he came; I was sick while I was working; it rained while I was working; she scolded while I was working.*” I need not tell you the use of *do* and *did*; I need not say that *I do work* is the same as *I work*, only the former expresses the action more positively, and adds some degree of force to the assertion; and that *did work* is the same as *worked*, only the former is, in the past time, of the same use as *do* is in the present. I need not dwell here on the uses of *will*, *shall*, *may*, *might*, *should*, *would*, *can*, *could*, and *must*; which uses, various as they are, are as well known to us all as the uses of our teeth and our noses; and to misapply which words argues not only a deficiency in the reasoning faculties, but also a deficiency in instinctive discrimination. I will not, my dear James, in imitation of the learned doctors, pester you with a philological examination into the origin and properties of words, with regard to the use of which, if you were to commit an error in conversation, your brother Richard, who is four years old, would instantly put you right. Of all these little words I have said quite enough before; but when the Verbs *to have* and *to be* are used as *auxiliaries to principal Verbs*, and, especially, when the sentences are long, errors of great consequence may be com-

mitted; and, therefore, against these it will be proper to guard you.

And yet, here in the United States, there is no more common error than the confounding of *shall* and *will*. If you can stick the following rule fast in your mind, it will save you from making many mistakes in the use of these words:—*I shall*, *you will*, *he will*, are the forms of the FUTURE, and merely FORETELL what will take place; *I will*, *you shall*, *he shall*, are the forms of the POTENTIAL, and express WILL OR DETERMINATION on the *part of the speaker*. The latter are equal to the German *ich will*, *du sollst*, *er soll*. Now try to repeat this rule without looking at the book. Turn it over in your mind, and try it in sentences of your own formation. Look at the last three paragraphs of Cobbett's Farewell Address to his Countrymen, page 159.

An English nobleman, Sir E. W. Head, has written a whole book on these two mighty little words, "Shall and Will," from which the following "admirable statement of the true distinction between these auxiliaries"\* is taken:

"*Will* in the first person expresses a *resolution* or a *promise*: 'I will not go' = *it is my resolution not to go*. 'I will give it you' = *I promise to give it you*. *Will* in the second person *foretells*: 'If you come at six o'clock, you will find me at home.' *Will* in the second person, in questions, anticipates a *wish* or an *intention*: 'Will you go to-morrow?' = *Is it your wish or intention to go to-morrow?* *Will* in the third person *foretells*, generally implying an *intention* at the same time, when the nominative is a *rational* creature; 'He will come to-morrow,' signifies what *is to take place*, and that it is the *intention* of the person mentioned to come. 'I think it will snow to-day,' intimates what is, probably, *to take place*. *Will* must never be used in questions with nominative cases of the first person: 'Will we come to-morrow?' = *Is it our intention or desire to come to-morrow?* which is an absurd question. We must say, *Shall we come to-morrow?*

"*Would* is subject to the same rules as *will*. *Would* followed by *that* is frequently used (the nominative being expressed or understood) to express a *wish*: 'Would that he had died before this disgrace befell him!' = *I wish that he had died before this disgrace befell him*. *Would have*, followed by an infinitive, signifies a desire *to do* or *to make*; 'I would have you think of these things' = *I wish to make you think of these things*. *Would* is often used to express a

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\*A. S. Hill's Rhetoric, in which I found the above rule and this quotation.



*custom*: 'He would often talk about these things' = '*It was his custom to talk of these things.*

"*Shall* in the first person *foretells*, simply expressing *what is to take place*: 'I shall go to-morrow.' Notice that no *intention* or *desire* is expressed by *shall*. *Shall*, in the first person, in questions, asks permission: 'Shall I read?' = *Do you wish me, or will you permit me to read?* *Shall* in the second and third persons expresses *a promise, a command, or a threat*: 'You shall have these books to-morrow' = *I promise to let you have these books to-morrow.* 'Thou shalt not steal' = *I command thee not to steal.* 'He shall be punished for this' = *I threaten to punish him for this offense.*

"*Should* is subject to the same rules as *shall*. *Should* frequently expresses *duty*: 'You should not do so' = *It is your duty not to do so.* *Should* often signifies *a plan*: 'I should not do so' = *It would not be my plan to do so.* *Should* often expresses *supposition*: 'Should they not agree to the proposals, what must I do?' = *Suppose that it happen that they will not agree to the proposals."*

If you wish any more on this Head, read any play of Shakespeare's, and take down every sentence with *will* or *shall*, *would* or *should*, and learn them by heart. Mr. White, speaking of this very matter, says admirably, "The best way is, to give yourself no trouble at all about your grammar. Read the best authors, converse with the best speakers, and know what you mean to say, and you will speak and write good English, and may let grammar go to its own place!" Jacob said to the angel, "I *will* not let thee go till thou hast blessed me." You would say to your servant, "I *shall* let you go if you do your duty." Consider the difference in meaning between these two.

259. *Time* is so plain a matter; it must be so well known to us, whether it be the *present*, the *past*, or the *future*, that we mean to express, that we shall hardly say, "*We work*," when we are speaking of our *having worked last year*. But you have seen in Letter XVI, paragraph 171 (look at it again), that Doctor Blair could make a mistake in describing *the time of an action*. Doctor BLAIR makes use of "*it had been better omitted.*" Meaning that it *would have been* better to omit it. This is a sheer vulgarism, like, "I *had* as lief be killed as enslaved." Which ought to be, "I *would* as lief." But the most common error is the using of the Verb *to have*

with the passive participle, when the *past time*, simply, or the *infinitive* of the Verb ought to be used. “Mr. Speaker, I *expected* from the former language and positive promises of the Noble Lord and the Right Honorable the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to *have seen* the Bank paying in gold and silver.” This is House-of-Commons language. Avoid it as you would avoid all the rest of their doings. I *expected to see*, to be sure, and not *have seen*, because the *have seen* carries *your act of seeing back beyond the period* within which it is supposed to *have been expected to take place*. “I *expected to have ploughed* my land last *Monday*.” That is to say, “I *last Monday* was in the act of expecting to have ploughed my land *before that day*.” But this is not what the writer means. He means to say that, last Monday, or before that day, he was in the act of expecting *to plough* his land on that day. “I called on him and *wished to have submitted* my manuscript to him.” Five hundred such errors are to be found in Dr. Goldsmith’s works. “I wished, *then and there, to submit* my manuscript to him.” I wished *to do* something *there*, and did not *then* wish that I had *done* something before.

260. When you use the *active participle*, take care that the *times* be attended to, and that you do not, by misapplication, make confusion and nonsense. “I had not the pleasure of *hearing* his sentiments when I wrote that letter.” It should be of *having heard*; because the *hearing* must be supposed to have been wanted *previous* to the act of writing. This word *wanted*, and the word *wanting*, are frequently misused. “All that was *wanting* was honesty.” It should be *wanted*. “The Bank is weighed in the balance, and found wanting,” and not *wanted*. Found to be *wanting*, or *in want*; in want of money to pay its notes.

261. I will not fatigue your memory with more examples relating to the *times* of Verbs. Consider well what you

*mean*; what you *wish to say*. Examine well into the true meaning of your words, and you will never make a mistake as to the times. “*I thought to have heard* the Noble Lord produce something like proof.” No! my dear James will never fall into the use of such senseless gabble! You would think of *hearing* something; you would expect *to hear*, not *to have heard*. You would be *waiting to hear*, and not, like these men, be *waiting to have heard*. “*I should have liked to have been informed* of the amount of the Exchequer Bills.” A phraseology like this can be becoming only in those Houses where it was proposed to relieve the distresses of the nation by setting the laborers to dig holes one day and fill them up the next.

262. It is erroneous to confound the *past time* with the *passive participle* of the Verb. But now, before I speak of this very common error, let us see a little more about the *participles*. You have seen, in Letter VIII, what the participles are; you have seen that *working* is the active participle, and *worked* the passive participle. We shall speak fully of the active by-and-by. The passive participle and the Verb *to be*, or some part of that Verb, make what is called the *passive Verb*. This is not a Verb which, *in its origin*, differs from an active Verb, in like manner as a *neuter* Verb differs from an active Verb. *To sleep* is neuter in its origin, and must, in all its parts, be neuter; but every active Verb *may* become a *passive Verb*. The passive Verb is, in fact, that state of an active Verb which expresses, as we have seen above, the action as being *received* or *endured*; and it is called *passive* because the *receiver* or *endurer* of the action is *passive*; that is to say, *does nothing*. “John *smites*; John *is smitten*.” Thus, then, the passive Verb is no other than the passive participle used along with some part of the Verb *to be*.

263. Now, then, let us see a specimen of the errors of which I spoke at the beginning of the last paragraph.

When the Verb is *regular*, there can be no error of this sort; because the past time and the passive participle are written in the same manner; as, "John *worked*; John *is worked*." But, when the Verb is *irregular*, and when the past time and the passive participle are written in a manner different from each other, there is room for error, and error is often committed: "John *smote*; John *is smote*." This is gross. It offends the ear; but when a company, consisting of men who have been enabled, by the favor of the late William Pitt, to plunder and insult the people, meet under the name of a Pitt Club, to celebrate the birthday of that corrupt and cruel minister, those who publish accounts of their festivities always tell us, that such and such toasts *were drank*; instead of *drunk*. I *drank* at my dinner to-day; but the milk and water which I *drank*, *were drunk* by me. In the lists of Irregular Verbs, in Letter VIII, the differences between the past times and the passive participles are all clearly shown. You often hear people say, and see them write, "We *have spoke*; it *was spoke* in my hearing;" but "we *have came*; it *was did*," are just as correct.

It may be well to notice that most of these verbs, like the German verbs from which they are derived, change the *i* to *a* in the past tense, and to *u* in the past participle. Say, therefore, I sing, sang, have sung; I spring, sprang, have sprung; I ring, rang, have rung; I swim, swam, have swum; I sink, sank, have sunk; and so on. But there are a few exceptions; as, to fling, to cling, to wring, to sting, which change the *i* to *u* in both the past tense and the past participle.

264. *Done* is the passive participle of *to do*, and it is very often misused. This *done* is frequently a very great offender against grammar. *To do* is the *act of doing*. We often see people write, "I *did* not speak, yesterday, so well as I wished to have *done*." Now, what is meant by the writer? He means to say that he *did* not speak so well as he then *wished*, or was wishing, *to speak*.

Therefore, the sentence should be, "I did not speak yesterday so well as I wished *to do*." That is to say, "so well as I wished to do it;" that is to say, to do, or to perform, *the act of speaking*.

265. Take great care not to be too free in your use of the Verb *to do* in any of its times or modes. It is a nice little *handy* word, and, like our oppressed *it*, it is made use of very often when the writer is at a *loss* for what to put down. *To do* is to *act*, and, therefore, it never can, in any of its parts, supply the place of a *neuter* Verb. Yet, to employ it for this purpose is very common. Dr. BLAIR, in his 23rd Lecture, says: "It is somewhat unfortunate that this Number of the Spectator did not *end*, as it might very well have *done*, with the former beautiful period." That is to say, "done *it*." And, then, we ask: done what? Not the *act of ending*; because, in this case, there is *no action* at all. The Verb means *to come to an end*; *to cease*; *not to go any further*. This same Verb *to end*, is, sometimes, an active Verb: "I *end* my sentence;" and then the Verb *to do* may supply its place; as, "I have not ended my sentence so well as I might have *done*;" that is, done *it*; that is, done, or performed, the *act of ending*. But the Number of the Spectator was *no actor*; it was expected to *perform* nothing; it was, by the Doctor, wished to have *ceased* to proceed. "Did not *end* as it very well might have ended. . . ." This would have been correct; but the Doctor wished to avoid the *repetition*, and thus he fell into bad grammar. "Mr. Speaker, I do not *feel* so well satisfied as I should have *done*, if the Right Honorable gentleman had explained the matter more fully." You constantly hear talk like this amongst those whom the boroughs make law-givers. To *feel* satisfied is, when the satisfaction is to arise from conviction produced by fact or reasoning, a senseless expression; and to supply its place, when it is, as in this case, a neuter Verb, by *to do*, is as senseless. Done *what*?

Done *the act of feeling!* “I do not *feel* so well satisfied as I should have *done*, or *executed*, or *performed* the *act of feeling!*” What incomprehensible words! Very becoming in the creatures of corruption, but ridiculous in any other persons in the world.

266. But do not misunderstand me. Do not confound *do* and *did*, as parts of a *principal* Verb, with the same words, as parts of an *auxiliary*. Read again Letter VIII, paragraph 111. *Do* and *did*, as *helpers*, are used with neuter as well as with active Verbs; for here it is not their business to *supply the place* of other Verbs, but merely to add strength to affirmations and negations, or to mark time; as, “The sentence *does end*; I *do feel* easy.” But *done*, which is the passive participle of the active Verb *to do*, can never be used as an auxiliary. The want of making this distinction has led to the very common error of which I spoke in the last paragraph, and against which I am very desirous to guard you.

267. In sentences which are *negative* or *interrogative*, *do* and *did* express *time*; as, “You *do not sleep*; *did* you not *feel?*” But they do not here *supply the place* of other Verbs; they merely help; and their assistance is useful only as to the circumstance of time; for we may say, “You *sleep* not; *felt* you not?” And if in answer to this question, I say, “I *did*,” the word *feel* is understood; “I *did feel*.”

You will sometimes hear even Wall-street millionaires say, “I done it; he seen him; he is dead broke;” which is confounding the past participle and the past tense. You must say, I did it, I saw him; he is dead broken; or, rather, completely ruined. But here is a very important matter; something which Cobbett does not touch; something of prime importance. What is the difference between “I did it” and “I have done it?” between “I was in New York” and “I have been in New York?” between “I wrote the letter” and “I have written the letter?” When do you use the one and when the other? Think for a moment. Give your own explanation before reading mine. These two forms are

termed the past tense and the present perfect tense. Those who are "native and to the manner born" seldom confound these tenses, but foreigners constantly do. The distinction between them, however, is exceedingly plain. We use the past tense when speaking of anything that has happened in a *completely past time*; as, I did it yesterday; I was in New York last week; I wrote a letter last Thursday. We use the present perfect tense when speaking of anything that has happened in a time *not yet entirely past*, or in an *indefinite past time*: I have done it to-day; I have been in New York this week; I have written many letters; I have been in Paris. Both the Germans and the French can, in their languages, use either form for the same time; so that they can say, which we cannot, "I have been in New York yesterday: I have written a letter last week."

The past perfect, *I had done*, *I had written*, *I had been*, is used when speaking of something happening at a time farther back than or anterior to a given past time. For instance: While I am telling you of what happened to me in 1868 in London, and of my doing something there at that time, and of my writing a letter to somebody in that year, I suddenly inform you, for the better understanding of my narrative, that I *had been* in London before that year; that I *had done* something there before that time, and that I *had written* to somebody before writing at that time. This, you see, is past perfect time; it is going behind the past time of our narrative; and it is called the perfectly past time.

268. Well, then, I think, that as far as relates to the active Verb, the passive Verb, and the passive participle, enough has now been said. You have seen, too, something of the difference between the functions of the active Verb and those of the *neuter*; but there are a few remarks to be made with regard to the latter. A neuter Verb cannot have a noun or a pronoun in the objective case immediately after it; for though we say, "I *dream* a dream," it is understood that my mind has been engaged *in* a dream. "I *live* a good life," means that I am living in a good manner. "I *walk* my horse about," means that I lead or conduct my horse in the pace called a *walk*. Nor can a neuter Verb become *passive*; because a passive Verb is no other than a Verb describing an *action received*

or *endured*. "The noble earl, on returning to town, found that the noble countess *was eloped* with his grace." I read this very sentence in an English newspaper not long ago. It should be *had eloped*; for *was eloped* means that *somebody* had *eloped the countess*; it means that *she* had *received* or *endured*, from some actor, *the act of eloping*, whereas, she is the actress, and the act is confined to *herself*. The Verb is called neuter because the action does not pass over to anything. There are Verbs which are *inactive*; such as, to *sit*, to *sleep*, to *exist*. These are also neuter Verbs, of course. But *inactivity* is not necessary to the making of a Verb neuter. It is sufficient for this purpose that the action do not pass from the actor to any object.

These *inactive* verbs are the *real* neuter ones; for, in the use of them, the nominative is neither *acting* nor *acted on*. But we now set down the whole batch, neuter and intransitive, as intransitive verbs; and Cobbett simply shows, by this verb *to elope*, that we cannot use an intransitive verb in the passive voice; we can no more say *I am eloped* than we can say *I am sitted*, *I am slept*, or *I am existed*. There are a few intransitive verbs that seem an exception to this rule; but they are not. I mean the verbs *to come*, *to arrive*, *to go*, *to return*, *to fall*, *to rise*, and some others. Let me set them down in the two ways in which they are used:

He has come,	He is come.
He has arrived,	He is arrived.
He has gone,	He is gone.
He has returned,	He is returned.
He has fallen,	He is fallen.
He has risen,	He is risen.

In the second form, *He is come*, etc., the words *come*, *arrived*, *gone*, *returned*, *fallen*, *risen*, are not really participles, but adjectives, indicating *state*; so this form is not at all a passive form of the verb; it is simply neuter; for the subject is neither acting nor acted on. In the first form, *He has come*, etc., these words are participles, and the sentences indicate *action* completed. But I find I am anticipating; Cobbett says the same thing in the next paragraph but one. Just keep in mind that what he calls *neuter*



we now call *intransitive*; and that what he calls *active*, we now call *transitive*.

269. In the instance just mentioned, the error is flagrant: "*was eloped*," is what few persons would put down in writing; yet anybody might do it upon *the authority of Dr. Johnson*; for he says in his Dictionary that *to elope* is an *active Verb*, though he says that it is synonymous with *to run away*, which, in the same Dictionary, he says, is a *neuter Verb*. However, let those who prefer Doctor Johnson's authority to the dictates of reason and common sense say that "*his grace eloped the countess*;" and that, accordingly, the countess *was eloped*."

270. The danger of error, in cases of this kind, arises from the circumstance of there being many Verbs which are active in one sense and neuter in another. The Verb *to endure*, for instance, when it means to *support*, to *sustain*, is active; as, "*I endure pain*." But when it means to *last*, to *continue*, it is neuter; as, "*The earth endures from age to age*." In the first sense we can say, the pain is *endured*; but, in the last, we cannot say the earth is *endured* from age to age. We say, indeed, *I am fallen*; the colt is *grown*, the trees are *rotten*, the stone is *crumbled*, the post is *mouldered*, the pitcher is *cracked*; though to grow, to rot, to crumble, to moulder, to crack, are all of them *neuter Verbs*. But it is clearly understood here that we mean that the colt is in a *grown*, or *augmented state*; that the trees are in a *rotten state*; and so on; and it is equally clear that we could not mean that the countess was in an *eloped state*. "*The noble earl found that the countess was gone*." This is correct, though *to go* is a neuter Verb. But *gone*, in this sense, is not the participle of the Verb *to go*; it is merely an *adjective*, meaning *absent*. If we put any word after it, which gives it a verbal signification, it becomes erroneous. "*He found that the countess was gone out of the house*." That is to

say, was *absent out of the house*; and this is nonsense. It must, in this case be, "He found that the countess *had gone out of the house*."

271. Much more might be said upon this part of my subject; many niceties might be stated and discussed; but I have said quite enough on it to answer every useful purpose. Here, as everywhere else, take time to *think*. There is a *reason* for the right use of every word. Have your *meaning* clear in your mind; know the *meaning* of all the words you employ; and then you will seldom commit errors.

272. There remains to be noticed the use of the *active participle*, and then we shall have a few, and only a few, words to say upon the subject of the *modes* of Verbs. As to the active participle, paragraph 97, in Letter VIII, will have told you nearly all that is necessary. We know well that *I am working* means that *I work*, and so on. There is great nicety in distinguishing the circumstances which call for the use of the one from those which call for the other: but, like many other things, though very difficult to explain by words, these circumstances are perfectly well understood, and scrupulously attended to, by even the most illiterate persons. The active participle is, you know, sometimes a *noun* in its functions; as, "*Working* is good for our health." Here it is the *nominative* case to the Verb *is*. Sometimes it is an adjective; as, "the *working* people." As a noun it may be in any of the three cases; as, "*Working* is good; the advantage of *working*; I like *working*." It may be in the singular or in the plural: "The *working* of the mines; the *workings* of corruption." Of course it requires *articles* and *prepositions* as nouns require them. More need not be said about it; and, indeed, my chief purpose in mentioning the active participle in this place is to remind you that it may be a *nominative case* in a sentence.

273. The *modes* have been explained in Letter VIII,

paragraphs 92, 93, 94, 95, and 96. Read those paragraphs again. The *infinitive mode* has, in almost all respects, the power of a *noun*. “*To work* is good for our health.” Here it is the nominative of the sentence. “To eat, to drink, and to sleep, *are* necessary.” It cannot become a plural; but it may be, and frequently is, in the objective case; as, “*I want to eat.*” The *to* is, in some few cases, omitted when the infinitive is in the objective case; as, “*I dare write.*” But, “*I dare to write,*” is just as neat, and *more* proper. The *to* is omitted by the use of the *ellipsis*; as, “*I like to shoot, hunt, and course.*” But care must be taken not to leave out the *to*, if you thereby make the *meaning doubtful*. Repetition is sometimes disagreeable, and tends to enfeeble language; but it is always preferable to obscurity.

Here is a little difficulty. Cobbett has repeatedly said that the nominative always follows the verb *to be*; and so it does; but it is not always so with the *infinitive* of this verb. Look at these two sentences:

I supposed it to be him.

I am supposed to be he.

In the first instance, the grammarians say that we must say *to be him*, because it follows a word in the objective case (it), and is the complement of that word; and in the second case we must say *to be he*, because it follows a word in the nominative case (I), and is the complement of that word. Observe that in the second example it is as if I said, “*I am supposed to be existing;*” and in the first, as if I said, “*I supposed something.*”

274. If you cast your eye once more on the conjugation of the Verb *to work*, in Letter VIII, you will see that I have there set down the three other modes with all their persons, numbers, and times. The *imperative mode* I despatched very quietly by a single short paragraph; and, indeed, in treating of the other two modes, the *indicative* and the *subjunctive*, there is nothing to do but to point out the trifling variations that our Verbs undergo in order to make them suit their forms to the differences of *mode*.

The indicative mode is that manner of using the Verb which is applied when we are speaking of an action without any other action being at all connected with it, so as to make the one a *condition* or *consequence* of the other. "He *works* every day; he *rides* out;" and so on. But, there may be a condition or a consequence dependent on this working and riding; and in that case these Verbs must be in the subjunctive mode; because the action they express *depends* on something else, going before or coming after. "If he *work* every day, he *shall be paid* every day; if he *ride* out, he will not be at home by supper time." The *s* is dropped at the end of the Verbs here; and the true cause is this, that there is a *sign* understood. If filled up, the sentence would stand thus: "If he *should work*; if he *should ride* out." So that, after all, the Verb has, in reality, *no change of termination to denote what is called mode*. And all the fuss which grammarians have made about the *potential* modes, and other fanciful distinctions of the kind, only serve to puzzle and perplex the learner.

275. Verbs in general, and, indeed, all the Verbs, except the Verb *to be*, have always the *same form* in the *present time of the indicative* and in that of the *subjunctive*, in all the persons, save the second and third person singular. Thus, we say, in the present of the indicative, *I work, we work, you work, they work*; and in the subjunctive the same. But we say, in the former, *thou workest, he works*; while, in the subjunctive, we say, *thou work, he work*; that is to say, *thou mayst work, or mightst, or shouldst* (and so on), work; and he *may work, or might or should*, as the sense may require. Therefore, as to all Verbs, except the Verb *to be*, it is *only in these two persons* that any thing can happen to render any distinction of mode necessary. But the Verb *to be* has more variation than any other Verb. *All other Verbs* have the same form in their indicative *present time* as in their *infinitive mode*,

with the trifling exception of the *st* and *s* added to the second and third person singular; as, to *have*, to *write*, to *work*, to *run*; I *have*, I *write*, I *work*, I *run*. But the Verb *to be* becomes, in the present time of its indicative, I *am*, thou *art*, he *is*, we *are*, you *are*, they *are*; which are great changes. Therefore, as the subjunctive, in all its persons, takes the infinitive of the Verb without any change at all, the Verb *to be* exhibits the use of this mode most clearly; for, instead of I *am*, thou *art*, he *is*, we *are*, the subjunctive requires, I *be*, thou *be*, he *be*, we *be*; that is to say, I *may be*, or *might be*; and so on. Look now at the *conjugation* of the Verb *to be*, in Letter VIII, paragraph 117; and then come back to me.

276. You see, then, that this important Verb, *to be*, has a form in some of its persons appropriated to the *subjunctive mode*. This is a matter of consequence. Distinctions, without differences in the things distinguished, are fanciful, and, at best, useless. Here is a real difference; a practical difference; a difference in the form of the word. Here is a *past time* of the subjunctive; a past time distinguished, in some of its persons, by a different manner of spelling or writing the word. If I *be*; if I *were*; if he *were*; and not if I *was*, if he *was*. In the case of other Verbs, the past of the indicative is the same as the past of the subjunctive; that is to say, the Verb is written in the same letters; but in the case of the Verb *to be* it is otherwise. If I *worked*, if I *smote*, if I *had*. Here the Verbs are the same as in I *worked*, I *smote*, I *had*; but in the case of the Verb *to be*, we must say, in the past of the indicative, I *was*, and in that of the subjunctive, if I *were*.

277. The question, then, is this: *What are the cases* in which we ought to use the subjunctive form? Bishop Lowth, and, on his authority, Mr. Lindley Murray, have said, that *some* conjunctions have a *government* of verbs; that is to say, *make them* or *force them to be* in the subjunctive mode. And then these gentlemen mention par-

ticularly the conjunctions, *if*, *though*, *unless*, and some others. But (and these gentlemen allow it), the Verbs which follow these conjunctions are not *always* in the subjunctive mode; and the using of that mode must depend, *not upon the conjunction*, but upon the sense of the whole sentence. How, then, can the conjunction govern the Verb? It is the sense, the meaning of the whole sentence, which must govern; and of this you will presently see clear proof. "*If* it be dark, do not come home. *If* eating is necessary to man, he ought not to be a glutton." In the first of these sentences, the matter expressed by the Verb *may be* or *may not be*. There exists an *uncertainty* on the subject. And if the sentence were filled up, it would stand thus: "If it *should be* dark, do not come home." But in the second sentence there exists no such uncertainty. We know, and all the world knows, that *eating is necessary to man*. We could not fill up the sentence with *should*; and, therefore, we make use of *is*. Thus, then, the conjunction *if*, which you see is employed in both cases, has nothing at all to do with the government of the verb. It is the sense which governs.

It is worth while, however, to notice the conjunctions that are said to govern the subjunctive: *though*, *although*, *unless*, *lest*, *until*, *till*, *whether*, *provided that*, *on condition that*,—because, when used, they generally indicate some uncertainty. When they do not do this, then the indicative must be used. Here is an example that will illustrate this. If I were speaking of the possibilities in the future career of a young man, I should naturally say: "Unless he *be* honest, he will never, though he *be* rich as Cræsus, be happy." But if I were speaking of a real person, who is actually rich as Cræsus, I should naturally say, "Though he *is* rich as Cræsus, he is not happy." Again: "Do not admit him, unless he *has* a ticket." Here we say *has*, because we anticipate something as *fact*. But, where there is a doubt, we use the subjunctive. "Do not give him the money, unless he *return* you the goods." When, therefore, anything is spoken of as *actual fact*, or as in *absolute existence*, the indicative is used. Those who have studied French will remember

that the French have also a number of words that govern the subjunctive, and in many, if not most, of the cases where they use the subjunctive, we do so too. Though he be a giant; unless he be attentive; lest he hurt you; provided that he pay you; on condition that he reward you; wait until he come. The French use the subjunctive in all these cases. They also use it after certain verbs, as we do too; as, "Be sure that he *lay* no hand on you; mind that he *do* not touch you." You have doubtless noticed this use of the subjunctive in such sentences as that of Cobbett himself in paragraph 250: "You must take care that there *be* a nominative, and that it *be* clearly expressed or understood." Some writers think that the subjunctive mode is fast passing out of use, and that it will soon be altogether obsolete. I can only say that if it do go out of use, we shall lose the means of indicating different shades of meaning in the words we use. I suppose one reason why it is going out of use is because the great army of newspaper-writers know nothing of it; they are obliged to write with such extraordinary rapidity and in such haste that they can't take time to consider fine shades or differences of meaning in the words they employ.—Notice that the difference between the indicative and the subjunctive, in all verbs except the verb *to be*, is simply this, that in the subjunctive THE ENDINGS ARE ALL OUT OFF. Cast your eye over the conjugations of *to work* and *to be worked*.

278. There is a great necessity for care as to this matter; for the meaning of what we write is very much affected when we make use of the modes indiscriminately. Let us take an instance. "Though her chastity *be* right and becoming, it gives her no claim to praise; because she would be criminal *if* she *were* not chaste." Now, by employing the subjunctive, in the first member of the sentence, we leave it *uncertain* whether *it be right* or *not* for her to be chaste; and by employing it in the second, we express a *doubt as to the fact* of her chastity. We mean neither of these; and, therefore, notwithstanding here are a *though* and an *if*, both the Verbs ought to be in the indicative. "Though her chastity *is* right and becoming, it gives her no claim to praise; because she would be criminal *if* she *was* not chaste." Fill up with the signs. "Though her chastity *may be* right; if she *should not be*

chaste;" and then you see, at once, what a difference there is in the meaning.

279. The subjunctive is necessarily always used where *a sign is left out*; as, "Take care that *he come* to-morrow, that *you be* ready to receive him, that *he be* well received, and that *all things be* duly prepared for his entertainment." Fill up with the *signs*, and you will see the *reason* for what you write.

280. The Verb *to be* is sometimes used thus: "*Were he* rich, I should not like him the better. *Were it* not dark, I would go." That is to say, *if he were*; *if it were*. "*It were* a jest, indeed, to consider a set of seat-sellers and seat-buyers as a lawful legislative body. *It were* to violate every principle of morality to consider honesty as a virtue, when not to be honest is a crime which the law punishes." The *it* stands for a great deal here. "Ridiculous, indeed, would the state of our minds be, if it *were* such as to exhibit a set of seat-sellers and seat-buyers as a lawful legislative body." I mention these instances because they appear *unaccountable*; and I never like to slur things over. Those expressions for the using of which we cannot give *a reason* ought not to be used at all.

There is another use of the verb *to be*, unnoticed by Cobbett, which may be spoken of here. It has long been a matter of controversy whether we should say, "the bridge is building," or "the bridge is being built;" "preparations are making," or "preparations are being made." Mr. White maintains that the former is the only proper form, and that the latter form is contrary to the genius of our language. And other critics are of the same opinion. Well, there is no use in talking of it now; it is too late to alter it; for this manner of speaking is now used by almost everybody that speaks or writes English. Every newspaper in the United States uses this form; and the truth is, it has become a necessity, for there are some cases in which no other form can be used without changing the meaning of the sentence. We can say, The house is building, the book is printing, the play is acting, the bread is baking, the clothes are making, and so on, in many other instances; but we cannot say, "The boy is whipping" or "The girl is



ruining" to signify that "The boy is being whipped" or "The girl is being ruined." No; it is no use trying to change this now; there are certain cases where we *must* use "is being;" it is in the very life-blood of the language; it is every-day English; and there is no taking it out. It is like the word *execute*, which originally meant, and still properly means, to put a *sentence* into force; but now it is used every day, in print and in conversation, to signify putting a person to death. And there is no doubt but it will continue to be so used to the end of time; for no dictum of the critics can change it.

It is worth while remarking, that in sentences like "The house is building," "the corn is thrashing," the words *building* and *thrashing* are not verbs, but nouns; for the original form was "in building," "in thrashing." The Germans have an entirely different verb for such expressions; for "The house is building" they say *Das Haus wird* gebaut, and not *Das Haus ist* gebaut, which latter means The house is built.

281. As to instances in which authors have violated the principles of grammar, with respect to the use of the modes, I could easily fill a book much larger than this with instances of this kind from Judge BLACKSTONE and Doctor JOHNSON. One only shall suffice. I take it from the Judge's first Book. "Therefore, *if* the king *purchases* lands of the nature of gavel-kind, where *all the sons inherit equally*; yet, upon the king's demise, *his eldest son* shall succeed to these lands *alone*." Here is fine confusion, not to say something inclining towards high-treason; for, if the king's son be to inherit these *lands alone*, he, of course, is *not to inherit the crown*. But it is the Verb *purchases* with which we have to do at present. Now, it is notorious that the king *does not* purchase lands in gavel-kind, or any other lands; whereas, from the form of the Verb, it is taken for granted that he does it. It should have been, "If the king *purchase* lands;" that is to say, *if he were to purchase*, or *if he should purchase*.

282. Thus, my dear James, have I gone through all that appeared to me of importance relating to Verbs. Every part of the Letter ought to be carefully read, and

its meaning ought to be well weighed in your mind; but always recollect that, in the using of Verbs, that which requires your first and most earnest care is the ascertaining of the *nominative* of the sentence; for, out of every hundred grammatical errors, full fifty, I believe, are committed for want of due attention to this matter.

Let me say a word here which will make clear to you what the Germans mean by what they call genetic teaching; that is, unfolding a subject in such a way as to show how it originates and grows up to completion. The shortest possible sentence must have a subject and a predicate (nominative and verb); for although the one word, "Love!" is a sentence, the subject is understood: "Love thou!" The next step is the object: "Love thou me!" A sentence may, therefore, consist of merely subject and predicate, or of subject, predicate, and object.

The last is an imperative sentence; let us take a declarative one. "Men love." This is a sentence; it contains subject and predicate, and makes complete sense. "Men love women." This has subject, predicate, and object. Now we may go on adding words, phrases, and clauses, modifying each of these chief parts of the sentence, until we stretch it out into a compound or complex sentence. For a sentence, like a house, is just built up by successive additions. These additions are often called adjuncts; they consist of single words, of phrases and clauses. I shall add all I can to the separate words of this sentence; first modifying the subject by various single words, then by a phrase, then by a clause; and then I shall endeavor to do the same to the predicate and the object. Now observe, and you will see how a sentence grows:

Men love women.

The men love women.

The worthy men love women.

The very worthy men love women.

The very worthy men in this city love women.

The very worthy men in this city, who are noted for their excellent character, love women.

Here we have modified the subject, first by the definite article, then by an adjective, then we have modified the adjective by an adverb; then we have modified or limited the subject by a phrase, and finally by a clause. Now let us try and do the same thing to the predicate and the object:

Men love women.

Men love the women.

Men love the good women.

Men love the very good women.

Men love dearly the very good women.

Men love dearly the very good women of this city.

Men love dearly the very good women of this city, who are respected by all the world.

The whole sentence will therefore be: "The very worthy men in this city, who are noted for their excellent character, love dearly the very good women of this city, who are respected by all the world." This, therefore, has now become a complex sentence, of which the chief clause is, "Men love women," and all the rest modifies the subject, the predicate, and the object of this clause. Of course, it might be extended much farther; but this will do to show you how a sentence grows; or, if you please, how it is built up. Should you ever be requested to give a trial lesson in English grammar, in a class of scholars who have learned something of the subject, you cannot do better than show them, in this manner, how a sentence is formed.

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## LETTER XX.

### SYNTAX, AS RELATING TO ADVERBS, PREPOSITIONS, AND CONJUNCTIONS.

283. After what has been said, my dear James, on the subject of the Verb, there remains little to be added. The *Adverbs*, *Prepositions*, and *Conjunctions*, are all words which never *vary their endings*. Their uses have been sufficiently illustrated in the Letters on the Syntax of Nouns, Pronouns, and Verbs. In a Letter, which is yet to come, and which will contain specimens of *false grammar*, the misuse of many words, belonging to these inferior Parts of Speech, will be noticed; but it would be a waste of your time to detain you by an elaborate account of that which it is, by this time, hardly possible for you not to understand.

284. Some grammarians have given *lists* of Adverbs,

Prepositions, and Conjunctions. For what *reason* I know not, seeing that they have not attempted to give lists of the words of other parts of speech. These lists must be *defective*, and, therefore, worse than no lists. To find out the meaning of single words, the *Dictionary* is the place. The business of grammar is to show the connection between words, and the manner of using words properly. The sole cause of this dwelling upon these parts of speech appears to me to have been a notion that they would seem to be *neglected*, unless a certain number of pages of the book were allotted to each. To be sure each of them is a part of speech, as completely as the little finger is a part of the body; but few persons will think that, because we descant very frequently, and at great length, upon the qualities of the head and heart, we ought to do the same with regard to the qualities of the little finger.

285. I omitted, in the Letter on Verbs, to notice the use of the word *thing*; and I am not sorry that I did, because by my noticing it in this concluding paragraph, the matter may make a deeper impression on your mind. *Thing* is, of course, a *noun*. A *pen* is a thing, and every animal, or creature, animate or inanimate, is a *thing*. We apply it to the representing of every creature in the universe, except to men, women, and children; and a *creature* is that which has been *created*, be it living, like a *horse*, or dead, like *dirt* or *stones*. The use of the word *thing*, as far as this goes, is plainly reconcilable to reason; but “to get drunk is a beastly *thing*.” Here is neither human being, irrational animal, nor inanimate creature. Here is merely *an action*. Well, then, this action is the *thing*; for, as you have seen in Letter XIX, paragraph 273, a verb in the infinitive mode has, in almost all respects, the functions and powers of a *noun*. “It was a most atrocious *thing* to uphold the Bank of England in refusing to give gold for its promissory notes, and to compel the nation to submit to the wrong that it sustained from that refusal.”

The meaning is, that the whole of these measures or transactions constituted a most atrocious *deed* or *thing*.

Cobbett despatches the syntax of adverbs in half-a-dozen lines; and yet there is one little matter connected with the use of these words that has, perhaps, caused more uncertainty, perplexing uncertainty, than anything connected with grammar. We say, rightly, that he fights bravely and she sings finely; but shall I say that he looks bravely and that her voice sounds finely? I may say that he dances smoothly and that she plays sweetly; but shall I say that his coat feels smoothly and that she looks sweetly? If not, how am I to know when to use the adverb and when the adjective?

This, as I have said, is a matter which has puzzled many a student of grammar, and caused anxiety to many a young writer. Here is a rule which I have never seen in any grammar, but which, I think, will cover the majority of such cases, and is easily understood and remembered: After all the verbs referring to the FIVE SENSES, the adjective, and not the adverb, is to be used; as, It tastes *good*; it smells *nice*; it sounds *harsh*; it feels *smooth*; it looks *handsome*. Expressed in a larger and more comprehensive manner, the rule might stand thus: Wherever *manner* is to be expressed, use the adverb; wherever *quality* is to be expressed, use the adjective. Cobbett repeatedly uses the expression "talks *fine*;" meaning, of course, fine talk, and not the *manner* of speaking. In the same way, we must say, "I arrived here safe and sound," and not *safely* and *soundly*; for it is not the *manner* of arriving, but the *state* in which he arrived, that is meant.

I thought that Cobbett explained somewhere in this grammar the difference between *so* and *such*; but I cannot find it. Mr. Swinton says: "*So* has sometimes a pronominal use; as, 'Whether he is a genius or not, he is considered so'—(a genius)." I think this is an error; *so* is used *adjectively* and *adverbially*, not *pronominally*; *such* is used *pronominally*; as, Whether he be a genius or not, he is considered *such*; whether he be rich or not, he is considered *so*. (See paragraph 143.)

## LETTER XXI.

SPECIMENS OF FALSE GRAMMAR, TAKEN FROM THE WRITINGS OF  
DOCTOR JOHNSON, AND FROM THOSE OF DOCTOR WATTS.

MY DEAR JAMES :

The chief object of this Letter is to prove to you the necessity of using great care and caution in the construction of your sentences. When you see writers like Dr. Johnson and Dr. Watts committing grammatical errors, and, in some instances, making their words amount to nonsense, or at least making their meaning doubtful; when you see this in the author of a grammar and of a dictionary of the English language, and in the author of a work on the subject of logic; and when you are informed that these were two of the most learned men that England ever produced, you cannot fail to be convinced that constant care and caution are necessary to prevent you from committing not only similar, but much greater, errors.

Another object, in the producing of these specimens, is to convince you that a knowledge of the Latin and Greek languages does not prevent men from writing bad English. Those languages are, by impostors and their dupes, called “the *learned* languages;” and those who have paid for having studied them are said to have received “a *liberal* education.” These appellations are false, and, of course, they lead to false conclusions. *Learning*, as a noun, means *knowledge*, and *learned* means *knowing*, or *possessed of knowledge*. Learning is, then, to be acquired by *conception*; and, it is shown in *judgment*, in *reasoning*, and in the various modes of employing it. What, then, can *learning* have to do with any particular tongue! Good grammar, for instance, written in Welsh, or in the language of the Chippewa savages, is more *learned* than bad grammar written in Greek. The learning is in the

*mind* and not in the *tongue*; learning consists of *ideas* and not of the *noise* that is made by the mouth. If, for instance, the Reports drawn up by the House of Commons, and which are compositions discovering in every sentence ignorance the most profound, were written in Latin, should we then call them *learned*? Should we say that the mere change of the words from one tongue into another made that learned which was before unlearned? As well may we say that a falsehood written in English would have been truth if written in Latin; and as well may we say that a certain handwriting is a learned handwriting, or, that certain sorts of ink and paper are *learned* ink and paper, as that a language, or tongue, is a learned language or tongue.

The cause of the use of this false appellation, “learned languages,” is this, that those who teach them in England have, in consequence of their teaching, *very large estates in house and land*, which are public property, but which are now used for the sole benefit of those teachers, who are, in general, the relations or dependents of the aristocracy. In order to give a color of reasonableness to this species of appropriation, the languages taught by the possessors are called “the *learned* languages;” and which appellation is, at the same time, intended to cause the mass of the people to believe that the professors and learners of these languages are, in point of wisdom, far superior to other men; and to establish the opinion that all but themselves are *unlearned* persons. In short, the appellation, like many others, is a trick which fraud has furnished for the purpose of guarding the snug possessors of the property against the consequences of the people’s understanding the matter.

It is curious enough that this appellation of “learned languages” is confined to the English nation and the American, which inherits it from the English. Neither in France, in Spain, in Italy, nor in Germany, is this false

and absurd appellation in use. The same motives have not existed in those countries. There the monks and other priests have inherited from the founders. They had not any occasion to resort to this species of imposition. But in England the thing required to be glossed over. There was something or other required in that country as an apology for taking many millions a year from the public to keep men to do no apparently useful thing.

Seeing themselves unable to maintain the position that the Latin and Greek are more "*learned* languages" than others, the impostors and their dupes tell us that this is not what they mean. They mean, they say, not that those languages are, *in themselves*, more learned than others: but that, to possess a knowledge of them is a proof that the possessor is a *learned man*. To be sure, they do not offer us any argument in support of this assertion; while it would be easy to show that the assertion must, in every case, be false. But let it suffice, for this time, that we show that the possession of the knowledge of those languages does not prevent men from committing numerous grammatical errors when they write in their native language.

I have, for this purpose, fixed upon the writings of Doctor Johnson and of Doctor Watts; because, besides its being well known that they were deeply skilled in Latin and Greek, it would be difficult to find two men with more *real* learning. I take also the two works for which they are respectively the most celebrated; the *RAMBLER* of Doctor Johnson, and the *LOGIC* of Doctor Watts. These are works of very great learning. The *RAMBLER*, though its general tendency is to spread a gloom over life, and to damp all enterprise, private as well as public, displays a vast fund of knowledge in the science of morals; and the *LOGIC*, though the religious zeal of its pious, sincere, and benevolent author has led him into the very great error of taking his examples of



self-evident propositions from amongst those, many of which great numbers of men think not to be self-evident, is a work wherein profound learning is conveyed in a style the most simple, and in a manner the most pleasing. It is impossible to believe that the *Logic* was not revised with great care; and, as to the *RAMBLER*, the biographer of its author tells us that the Doctor made *six thousand* corrections and alterations before the work was printed in volumes.

The *RAMBLER* is in *Numbers*; therefore, at the end of each extract from it, I shall put the letter R, and the *Number*. The *Logic* is divided into *Parts and Chapters*. At the end of each extract from it, I shall put L; and then add the *Part and Chapter*. I shall range the extracts under the names of the parts of speech to which the erroneous words respectively belong.

## ARTICLES.

“I invited her to spend the day in viewing *a seat and gardens*.”—R. No. 34.

“For all our speculative acquaintance with things should be made subservient to our better conduct in *the civil and religious life*.”—L. Introduction.

The indefinite article *a* cannot, you kown, be put before a *plural* noun. We cannot say *a gardens*; but this is, in fact, said in the above extract. It should have been “a seat and *its gardens*.” “*Civil and religious life*,” in the second extract are general and indefinite. The article, therefore, was unnecessary, and is improperly used. Look back at the use of Articles, Letter IV.

## NOUNS.

“Among the innumerable historical *authors, who* fill every nation with accounts of *their ancestors*, or undertake to transmit to futurity the events of *their own time*,

the greater part, when fashion and novelty have ceased to recommend *them*, are of no *other use* than *chronological memorials*, which necessity may sometimes require to be consulted."—R. No. 122.

This is all confusion. *Whose* ancestors? The *nation's* ancestors are meant; but the *author's* are expressed. The two *theirs* and the *them* clearly apply to the *same Noun*. How easily all this confusion would have been avoided by considering the nation as a singular, and saying *its ancestors!* In the latter part of the sentence, the *authors* are called *chronological memorials*; and though we may, in some cases, use the word *author* for *author's work*; yet, in a case like this, where we are speaking of the authors as *actors*, we cannot take such a liberty.

"Each of these *classes* of the human race has desires, fears, and conversation peculiar to *itself*; cares which *another* cannot feel, and pleasures which *he* cannot partake."—R. No. 160.

The noun of multitude, classes, being preceded by *each*, has the pronoun *itself* properly put after it; but the *he* does not correspond with these. It should have been *it*. With regard to these two extracts, see paragraph 181.

"His great ambition was to shoot flying, and he, therefore, spent whole days in the woods, pursuing *game*, which, before he was near enough to see *them*, his approach frightened away."—R. No. 66.

*Game* is not a noun of *multitude*, like *mob*, or *House of Commons*. There are different *games* or *pastimes*; but this word, as applied to the describing of *wild animals*, has no plural; and, therefore, cannot have a plural pronoun to stand for it.

"The obvious duties of piety towards God and love towards man, with the *governments* of all our inclinations and passions."—L. Part 4.

This plural is so clearly wrong that I need not show *why* it is wrong.

“And by *this mean* they will better judge what to choose.”—L. Part 4.

*Mean*, as a noun, is never used in the *singular*. It, like some other words, has broken loose from all principle and rule. By universal acquiescence it is become always a plural, whether used with singular or plural pronouns and articles or not. Doctor Watts, in other instances, says, *this means*.

It is curious enough that we have several plural words like this, used in a *singular* manner. We not only say *this means*, but *this news*, *this series*, and *this species*. We say, “Great pains *is* taken, he has taken *much* pains;” because, in this sense, *pains* means *exertion, trouble*; while in the plural it means *bodily pains*. *Mean, means*, are properly used in the singular and plural when applied to the terms used in proportion. When you are speaking of various *distinct* things or operations, you ought to say, “By *these* means;” but when you are speaking of things or circumstances in a *mass*, you must say, “By *this means*.” Such sentences as, “This *is* one means of gaining your end,” and “The best means *is* by fair play,” are perfectly correct.

“Having delayed to buy a coach myself, till I should have the lady’s *opinion*, for *whose* use it was intended.”—R. No. 34.

We know that *whose* relates to *lady*, according to the Doctor’s meaning; but, grammatically, it does not. It relates to *opinion*. It should have been, “the opinion of the *lady*, for whose use.” See Syntax of Nouns, Letter XVI, paragraphs 170, 171.

## PRONOUNS.

“Had *the opinion* of my censurers been unanimous, *it* might have upset my resolutions; but, since I find them at variance with each other, I can, without scruple, neglect *them*, and follow my own imagination.”—R. No. 23.

You see the Doctor has, in the last member of the sentence, the *censurers* in his eye, and he forgets his nomina-

tive, *opinion*. It is the opinion that was *not unanimous*, and not the censurers who were not unanimous; for they were unanimous in censuring.

“*They* that frequent the chambers of the sick will generally find the sharpest pains and most stubborn maladies among *them* whom confidence in the force of nature formerly betrayed to negligence or irregularity; and that superfluity of strength, which was at once *their* boast and *their* snare, has often, to the end, no other effect than that it continues *them* long in impotence and anguish.”—R. No. 38.

The *they* and the first *them* ought to be *those*; the *to* ought to be *into*. The two *theirs* and the last *them* are not absolutely faulty, but they do not clearly enough relate to their antecedent.

“METISSA brought with her an old maid, recommended by her mother, *who* taught *her* all the arts of domestic management, and was, on every occasion, her chief agent and directress. *They* soon invented one reason or other to quarrel with all my servants, and either prevailed on me to turn *them* away, or treated *them* so ill that *they* left me of themselves, and always supplied *their* places with some brought from my wife’s family.”—R. No. 35.

Here is perfect confusion and pell-mell! *Which* of the two, the *old maid* or the *mother*, was it that taught the arts of domestic management? And which of the two was taught, *Metissa* or the *old maid*? “*They* soon invented.” Who are *they*? Are there two, or all the three? And *who* supplied the places of the servants? The meaning of the *words* clearly is that *the servants themselves supplied the places*. It is very rarely that we meet with so bad a sentence as this.

“I shall not trouble you with a history of the stratagems practised upon my judgment, or the allurements tried upon my heart, which, if you have, in any part of your life, been acquainted with *rural politics*, you will

easily conceive. *Their* arts have no great variety, *they* think nothing worth *their* care but money.”—R. No. 35.

“Their arts;” but *whose* arts? There is no antecedent, except “*rural politics*,” and thus, all this last sentence is perfect nonsense.

“But the fear of not being approved as just *copiers* of human manners is not the most important concern that *an author* of this sort ought to have before *him*.”—R. No. 4.

*An author* cannot be said to fear not to be approved as just *copiers*. The word *author* ought to have been in the plural, and *him* ought to have been *them*.

“The wit, whose vivacity condemns slower tongues to silence; the *scholar*, whose knowledge allows *no man* to think *he* instructs *him*.”—R. No. 188.

*Which of the two* is allowed? The *scholar* or the *no man*? Which of the two does *he* relate to? Which of the two does the *him* relate to? By a little *reflection* we may come at the Doctor’s meaning; but if we may stop to discover the grammatical meaning of an author’s *words*, how are we to imbibe the science which he would teach us?

“The state of the possessor of humble virtues, to the affector of great excellencies, is that of a small cottage of stone, to the palace raised with ice by the Empress of Russia; *it* was, for a time, splendid and luminous, but the first sunshine melted it to nothing.”—R. No. 22.

*Which*, instead of *it*, would have made clear that which is now dubious, for *it* may relate to cottage as well as to palace; or it may relate to state.

We do not now say *excellencies*, but *excellences*, for the singular is *excellence*. *Excellencies* is the plural of *excellency*, which is now seldom used except as a title of honor. It is the same kind of error as Castlereagh’s *indulgencies*, which you will see by-and-by.

“The *love of retirement* has, in all ages, adhered closely to those minds which have been most enlarged by knowl-

edge, or elevated by genius. Those who enjoyed *everything* generally supposed to confer happiness, have been forced to seek *it* in the shades of privacy.”—R. No. 7.

To seek *what?* The *love of retirement*, or *everything?* The Doctor means *happiness*, but his *words* do not mean it.

“Those who enjoyed” ought to be “Those who have enjoyed;” because no particular time is mentioned. (See paragraph 261.)

“Yet there is a certain race of men *that* make it their duty to hinder the reception of every work of learning or genius, *who* stand as sentinels in the avenues of fame, and value themselves upon giving ignorance and envy the first notice of *a prey*.”—R. No. 3.

*That*, or *who*, may, as we have seen, be the relative of a noun, which is the name of a rational being or beings; but *both* cannot be used, applicable to the *same noun* in the same sentence. Nor is “*a prey*” proper. *Prey* has *no plural*. It is like *fat*, *meat*, *grease*, *garbage*, and many other words of that description.

“For, among all the *animals* upon *which* nature has impressed *deformity* and *horror*, there was none *whom* he durst not encounter rather than a beetle.”—R. No. 126.

Here are *whom* and *which* used as the relatives to the *same noun*; and, besides, we know that *whom* can, in no case, be a relative to irrational creatures, and, in this case, the author is speaking of such creatures only. “*Horror*” is not a thing that can be impressed upon another thing so as to be seen. Horror is a *feeling of the mind*; for, though we say “horror was *visible on his countenance*,” we clearly mean that the outward *signs* of horror were visible. We cannot see horror as we can *deformity*. It should have been “*deformity and hideousness*.”

“To cull from the mass of *mankind* those individuals upon *which* the attention ought to be most employed.”—R. No. 4.

The antecedent belongs to *rational* beings, and, therefore, the *which* should have been *whom*.

“This determination led me to Metissa, the daughter of Chrisophilus, *whose person* was at least without deformity.”—R. No. 35.

The person of *which* of the two? Not of the old papa, to be sure; and yet this is what the *words* mean.

“To persuade *them who* are entering the world, that all are equally vicious, is not to awaken judgment.”—R. No. 119.

*Those persons* who are entering the world, and not any *particular* persons of whom we have already been speaking. We cannot say *them persons*; and, therefore, this sentence is incorrect.

“Of these pretenders, it is fit to distinguish *those who* endeavor to deceive from *them who* are deceived.”—R. No. 189.

“I have, therefore, given a place to what may not be useless to *them whose* chief ambition is to please.”—R. No. 34.

The *thems* in these two sentences should be *those*. But “*them who are deceived*” has another sort of error attached to it, for the *who*, remember, is not, of itself, a *nominative*. The antecedent, as you have seen, must be taken into view. This antecedent, must be *the persons*, understood; and then we have *them persons are deceived*.

“Reason, as to the power and principles of *it*, is the common gift of God to man.”—L. Introduction.

The *it* may relate to *power* as well as to *reason*. Therefore, it would have been better to say, “Reason, as to *its* power and principles;” for if clearness is always necessary, how necessary must it be in the teaching of logic!

“All the prudence that *any man* exerts in *his* common concerns of life.”—L. Introduction.

*Any man* means, here, the same as *men in general*, and the concerns mean the concerns common to men in general; and therefore the article *the* should have been used instead of the pronoun *his*.

“It gives pain to the mind and memory, and exposes the unskillful *hearer* to mingle the superior and inferior particulars together; it leads *them* into a thick wood instead of open daylight, and places *them* in a labyrinth instead of a plain path.”—L. Part 4, Chap 2.

The *grammar* is clearly bad; and the *rhetoric* is not quite free from fault. *Labyrinth* is the opposite of *plain path*, but *open daylight* is not the opposite of a *thick wood*. *Open plain* would have been better than *open daylight*; for open daylight may exist along with a thick wood.

### VERBS.

“There are many things which we every day see others unable to perform, and, perhaps, have even miscarried ourselves in attempting; and yet *can* hardly *allow* to be difficult.”—R. No. 122.

This sentence has in it one of the greatest of faults. The *nominative case* of *can allow* is not clear to us. This is a manner *too elliptical*. “*We can hardly allow them,*” is what was meant.

“A man’s eagerness *to do that good, to which he is not called*, will betray him into crimes.”—R. No. 8.

The man is not called *to the good*, but to do the good. It is not my business, at this time, to criticise the *opinions* of Doctor Johnson; but I cannot refrain from just remarking upon this sentence, that it contains the sum total of *passive obedience* and *non-resistance*. It condemns all disinterested zeal and everything worthy of the name of patriotism.

“We are not compelled to toil through half a folio to be convinced that the author has *broke* his promise.”—R. No. 1.

“The Muses, when they *sung* before the throne of Jupiter.”—R. No. 3.

In the first of these, the *past time* is used where the



*passive participle* ought to have been used; and in the second, the *passive participle* is used in the place of the *past time*. *Broken* and *sang* were the proper words.

“My purpose *was*, after ten months more spent in commerce, *to have withdrawn* my wealth to a safer country.”  
—R. No. 120.

The *purpose* *was present*, and therefore it *was* his purpose *to withdraw* his wealth.

“A man may, by great attention, persuade others that he really has the qualities that he presumes to boast; but the hour *will come* when he *should* exert them, and then whatever *he enjoyed* in *praise*, he *must suffer* in *reproach*.”  
—R. No. 20.

Here is a complete confounding of times. Instead of *should*, it should be *ought to*; and instead of *enjoyed*, it should be *may have enjoyed*. The sense is bad, too; for how can a man *suffer in reproach what he has enjoyed in praise*?

“He had taught himself to think riches more valuable than nature *designed them*, and to expect from them . . . .” —R. No. 20.

“I could prudently *adventure an inseparable union*.” —R. No. 119.

“I propose *to endeavor the entertainment* of my countrymen.” —R. No. 1.

“He may, by *attending the remarks*, which every paper will produce.” —R. No. 1.

In each of these four sentences, a *neuter* verb has the powers of an *active* [transitive] verb given to it. Designed them *to be*; adventure *on*; endeavor *to entertain*; attending *to*.” To *design a thing* is to draw it; to *attend a thing* is to wait on it. No case occurs to me, at present, wherein *adventure* and *endeavor* can be active [transitive] verbs; but, at any rate, they ought not to have assumed the active office here.

“*I was not condemned* in my youth to solitude, either

by indigence or deformity, *nor passed* the earlier part of life without the flattery of courtship.”—R. No. 119.

The verb cannot change from a *neuter* to an *active* without a repetition of the *nominative*. It should have been, *nor did I pass*; or, *nor passed I*.

“*ANTHEA was content* to call a coach, and *crossed* the brook.”—R. No. 34.

It should be “*she crossed* the brook.”

“He will be welcomed with ardor, *unless* he *destroys* those recommendations by his faults.”—R. No. 160.

“*If he thinks* his own judgment not sufficiently enlightened, he may rectify his opinions.”—R. No. 1.

“*If he finds*, with all his industry, and all his artifices, that he cannot deserve regard, or cannot obtain it, he may let the design fall.”—R. No. 1.

The subjunctive mode ought to be used in all these three sentences. In the first, the meaning is, “unless he *should* destroy.” In the last two, the Doctor is speaking of his own undertaking; and he means, “the author, if he *should* think, if he *should* find; may then rectify his opinions; may then let fall his design.” He therefore should have written, “if he *think*; if he *find*.”

“Follow solid argument wherever *it leads* you.”—L. Part 3.

Wherever it *may lead* you, *shall lead* you, is meant; and, therefore, the subjunctive mode was necessary. It should have been, “wherever *it lead* you.”

“See, therefore, that your general definitions, or descriptions, *are* as accurate as the nature of the thing will bear; see that your general divisions and distributions *be* just and exact; see that your axioms *be* sufficiently evident; see that your principles *be* well drawn.”—L. Part 4.

All these members are correct, except the first, where the verb is put in the indicative mode instead of the *subjunctive*. All the four have the same turn; they are all in the same mode, or manner; they should, therefore, all

have had the verb in the *same form*. They all required the subjunctive form.

### PARTICIPLES.

“Or, it is *the drawing* a conclusion, which was before either unknown or dark.”—L. Introduction.

It should be “the drawing *of* a conclusion;” for, in this case, the active participle becomes a *noun*. “The *act* of drawing” is meant, and clearly understood; and we cannot say, “the *act drawing* a conclusion.” When the article comes before, there must be the preposition after the participle. To omit the preposition in such cases is an error very common, and therefore I have noticed the error in this instance, in order to put you on your guard.

### ADVERBS.

“For thoughts are *only* criminal when they are first chosen, and then voluntarily continued.”—R. N. 8.

The *station*, or *place*, of the adverb is a great matter. The Doctor does not mean here that which his words mean. He means that “thoughts are criminal, *only when* they are first chosen and then voluntarily continued.” As the words stand, they mean that “thoughts are *nothing else*, or *nothing more*, than criminal,” in the case supposed. But here are other words not very properly used. I should like to be informed *how* a thought *can* be chosen; how that is possible; and also *how* we can *continue* a thought, or how we can *discontinue* a thought at our *will*. The science here is so very profound that we cannot see the bottom of it. Swift says, “whatever is *dark* is *deep*. Stir a puddle, and it is deeper than a well.” Doctor Johnson deals too much in this kind of profundity.

There is no word in our language more frequently misused than this word *only*. People constantly write and speak such sentences

as these : “ I have only received ten dollars. He only sells leather. He only speaks French ; ” and so on. The word *only* must be placed next to the word which it modifies : I have received only ten dollars ; he sells only leather, or leather only ; he speaks only French. As the sentences stand in the first instance, they do not mean what they are intended to mean : the first means, only *received* not spent or lost ; the second, only *sells* leather, never buys any ; the third only *speaks* French, never writes it.

“ I have heard *how* some critics have been pacified with claret and a supper, and others laid asleep with the soft notes of flattery. ” — R. No. 1.

*How* means *the manner in which*. As, “ *How* do you do ? ” That is, “ *In what manner* do you carry yourself on ? ” But the Doctor tells us here, in other words, the precise *manner in which* the critics were pacified. The *how*, therefore, should have been *that*.

“ I hope *not much* to tire those whom I shall not happen to please. ” — R. No. 1.

He did not mean that he did not *much hope*, but that he hoped not to *tire much*. “ I hope I shall not *much tire* those whom I may not happen to please. ” This was what he meant ; but he does not say it.

“ And it is a good judgment alone can dictate how *far* to proceed in it and *when* to stop. ” — L. Part 4.

Doctor Watts is speaking here of writing. In such a case an adverb, like *how far*, expressive of longitudinal space, introduces a *rhetorical figure* ; for the plain meaning is, that judgment will dictate *how much to write on it*, and not *how far to proceed in it*. The figure, however, is very proper, and much better than the literal words. But when a figure is *begun* it should be carried on throughout, which is not the case here ; for the Doctor begins with a figure of longitudinal space, and ends with a figure of *time*. It should have been “ *where* to stop. ” Or, “ *how long* to proceed in it and *when* to stop. ” To tell a man *how far* he is to go into the Western countries of America, and *when* he is to stop, is a very different

thing from telling him *how far* he is to go and *where* he is to stop. I have dwelt thus on this distinction, for the purpose of putting you on the watch, and guarding you against confounding figures. The less you use them the better, till you understand more about them.

“*In searching out matters of fact* in times past or in distant places, in which case moral *evidence* is sufficient, and moral *certainty* is the utmost that can be attained, *here* we derive a greater assurance of the *truth of it* by a number of persons, or multitude of circumstances, concurring to bear *witness to it*.”—L. Part 3.

The adverb *here* is wholly unnecessary, and it does harm. But what shall we say of the *of it*, and the *to it*? What is the *antecedent* of the *it*? Is *matters of fact* the antecedent? Then *them*, and not *it*, should have been the pronoun. Is *evidence* the antecedent? Then we have circumstances bearing *witness to evidence*! Is *certainty* the antecedent? Then we have the *truth of certainty*! Mind, my dear James, this sentence is taken from a treatise on logic! How necessary it is, then, for *you* to be careful in the use of this powerful little word *it*!

## PREPOSITIONS.

“And, as this practice is a commodious subject of rail-  
lery *to* the gay, and of declamation *to* the serious, it has  
been ridiculed . . . .”—R. No. 123.

*With* the gay; for *to* the gay means that the raillery  
is *addressed* *to* the gay, which was not the author’s  
meaning.

“When I was deliberating *to* what new qualifications I  
should aspire.”—R. No. 123.

*With regard to*, it ought to have been; for we cannot  
*deliberate a thing* nor *to a thing*.

“If I am not commended *for* the beauty of my works,  
I may hope to be pardoned *for* their brevity.”—R. No. 1.

We may commend him *for* the beauty of his works and we may *pardon* him *for* their brevity, if we deem the brevity *a fault*; but this is not what he means. He means that, at any rate, he shall have the *merit* of brevity. "If I am not commended for the beauty of my works, I may hope to be pardoned on *account of* their brevity." This was what the Doctor meant; but this would have marred a little the *antithesis*; it would have unsettled a little of the balance of that *see-saw* in which Dr. Johnson so much delighted, and which, falling into the hands of novel-writers and of Members of Parliament, has, by moving unencumbered with any of the Doctor's reason or sense, lulled so many thousands asleep! Dr. Johnson created a race of writers and speakers. "Mr. Speaker, that the state of the nation is very critical, all men must allow; but that it is wholly desperate, few men will believe." When you hear or see a sentence like this, be sure that the person who speaks or writes it has been reading Dr. Johnson, or some of his imitators. But, observe, these imitators go no further than the frame of the sentence. They, in general, take special care not to imitate the Doctor in knowledge and reasoning.

I have now lying on the table before me forty-eight errors, by Doctor Watts, in the use or omission of Prepositions. I will notice but two of them; the first is an error of commission, the second of omission.

"When we would prove the importance of any scriptural doctrine or duty, the multitude of texts wherein it is *repeated* and *inculcated upon* the reader seems naturally to instruct us that it is a matter of greater importance than other things which are but slightly or singly mentioned in the Bible."—L. Part 3.

The words *repeated* and *inculcated* both apply to *upon*; but we cannot *repeat* a thing *upon* a reader, and the words here used mean this. When several verbs or participles are joined together by a copulative conjunction,

care must be taken that the act described by each verb, or participle, be such as can be performed by the agent, and performed, too, in the manner, or for the purpose, or on the object, designated by the other words of the sentence.

The other instance of error in the use of the *Preposition* occurs in the very *first sentence* in the *Treatise on Logic*.

“Logic is the art of using reason well in our inquiries after truth, and the communication of it to others.”—L. Introduction.

The meaning of the *words* is this: that “*Logic* is the art of using reason well in our inquiries after truth, and *is also* the communication of it to others.” To be sure we do *understand* that it means that “Logic is the art of using reason well in our inquiries after truth, and *in* the communication of it to others;” but, surely, in a case like this, no room for doubt, or for hesitation, ought to have been left. Nor is “using reason *well*” a well-chosen phrase. It *may* mean *treating* it *well*; not *ill-treating* it. “Using reason *properly* or *employing* reason well,” would have been better. For, observe, Doctor Watts is here giving a *definition* of the thing of which he was about to treat; and he is speaking to persons unacquainted with that thing; for as to those acquainted with it, no definition was wanted. Clearness, everywhere desirable, was here absolutely necessary.

### CONJUNCTIONS.

“*As*, notwithstanding all that wit, or malice, or pride, or prudence, will be able to suggest, men and women must, at last, pass their lives together, I have never, *therefore*, thought those writers friends to human happiness who endeavor to excite in either sex a general contempt or suspicion of the other.”—R. No. 149.

The *as* is unnecessary; or the *therefore* is unnecessary.

“But the happy historian has no *other* labor *than of gathering* what tradition pours down before him.”—R. No. 122.

“Some have advanced, without due attention to the consequences of this notion, that certain virtues have their correspondent faults, and *therefore to exhibit* either apart is to deviate from probability.”—R. No. 4.

“But if the power of example is so great as to take possession of the memory by a kind of violence, care ought to be taken *that*, when the choice is unrestrained, the best examples only should be exhibited; and *that which* is likely to operate so strongly should not be mischievous or uncertain in its effects.”—R. No. 4.

It should have been, in the first of these extracts, “*than that of gathering*;” in the second, “and *that therefore*;” in the third, “and that *that which* is likely.” If the Doctor wished to avoid putting *two thats* close together, he should have chosen another form for his sentence. The *that which* is a *relative*, and the conjunction *that* was required to go before it.

“It is, therefore, a useful thing, when we have a fundamental truth, we *use* the synthetic method to explain it.”—L. Part 4.

It should have been *that* we use, or to use.

## WRONG PLACING OF WORDS.

Of all the faults to be found in writing, this is one of the most common, and perhaps it leads to the greatest number of misconceptions. All the words may be the proper words to be used upon the occasion; and yet, by a *misplacing* of a part of them, the meaning may be wholly destroyed; and even made to be the contrary of what it ought to be.

“I asked the question with no other intention than to



set the gentleman free from the necessity of silence, and give him an opportunity of mingling on equal terms with a polite assembly, from which, *however uneasy*, he could not then *escape, by a kind introduction* of the only subject on which I believed him to be able to speak with propriety."—R. No. 126.

This is a very bad sentence altogether. "*However uneasy*," applies to *assembly*, and not to *gentleman*. Only observe how easily this might have been avoided. "From which *he, however uneasy*, could not then escape." After this we have "*he could not then escape, by a kind introduction.*" We know what is *meant*; but the Doctor, with all his *commas*, leaves the sentence confused. Let us see whether we cannot make it clear. "I asked the question with no other intention than, by a kind introduction of the only subject on which I believed him to be able to speak with propriety, to set the gentleman free from the necessity of silence, and to give him an opportunity of mingling on equal terms with a polite assembly, from which he, *however uneasy*, could not then escape."

"Reason is the glory of human nature, and one of the chief eminences whereby we are raised above our fellow-creatures, the brutes, *in this lower world.*"—L. Introduction.

I have before showed an error in the *first* sentence of Doctor Watt's work. This is the *second* sentence. The words, "*in this lower world,*" are not words *misplaced* only; they are wholly *unnecessary*, and they do great harm; for they do these two things: first, they imply *that there are brutes in the higher world*; and, second, they excite a doubt, *whether we are raised above those brutes*.

I might, my dear James, greatly extend the number of my extracts from both these authors; but, these, I trust, are enough. I had noted down about two hundred errors in Doctor Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*; but afterwards

perceiving that he had revised and corrected the RAMBLER with *extraordinary care*, I chose to make my extracts from that work rather than from the Lives of the Poets.

### DOUBLE-NEGATIVE AND ELLIPSIS.

Before I dismiss the specimens of bad grammar, I will just take, from TULL, a sentence which contains striking instances of the misapplication of *Negatives*, and of the *Ellipsis*. In our language *two negatives* applied to the *same verb*, or to the same words of any sort, amount to an *affirmative*; as, “Do *not* give him *none* of your money.” That is to say, “Give him *some* of your money,” though the contrary is meant. It should be, “Do *not* give him *any* of your money.” Errors, as to this matter, occur most frequently when the sentence is formed in such a manner as to lead the writer out of sight and out of sound of the first negative before he comes to the point where he thinks a second is required; as, “Neither Richard nor Peter, as I have been informed, and indeed as it has been proved to me, *never* gave James authority to write to me.” You see it ought to be *ever*. But in this case, as in most others, there requires nothing more than a little *thought*. You see clearly that two negatives, applied to the same verb, destroy the negative effect of each other. “I will *not never* write.” This is the contrary of “I *will never* write.”

The Ellipsis, of which I spoke in Letter XIX, paragraph 227, ought to be used with *great care*. Read that paragraph again; and then attend to the following sentence of Mr. TULL, which I select in order to show you that very fine thoughts may be greatly marred by a too free use of the Ellipsis.

“It is strange that *no* author should *never* have written fully of the fabric of ploughs! Men of *greatest* learning have spent their time in contriving instruments to measure

the immense distance of the stars, and in finding out the dimensions and *even weight* of the planets. They think it more eligible to study the art of ploughing the sea with ships than of tilling the land with ploughs. They bestow the utmost of their skill, learnedly to pervert the natural use of all the elements *for destruction* of their own species by the bloody art of war; and some waste their whole lives in studying how to arm death with new engines of horror, *and inventing* an infinite variety of slaughter; but think it beneath men of learning (who only are capable of doing it) to employ their learned labors in the invention of new, or *even improving* the old, instruments *for increasing of* bread."

You see the *never* ought to be *ever*. You see that the *the* is left out before the word *greatest*, and again before *weight*, and, in this last-mentioned instance, the leaving of it out makes the words mean the "*even weight*;" that is to say, not the *odd weight*; instead of "*even the weight*," as the author meant. The conjunction *that* is left out before "*of tilling*;" before *destruction*, the article *the* is again omitted; *in* is left out before *inventing*, and also before *improving*; and, at the close, *the* is left out before *increasing*. To see so fine a sentence marred in this way is, I hope, quite enough to guard you against the frequent commission of similar errors.

We often see the word *alone* wrongly used for *only*; as, "To which I am not alone bound by honor, but by law;" but Mr. TULL uses *only* instead of *alone*. He should have said, "who alone are capable of doing it."

## LETTER XXII.

## ERRORS AND NONSENSE IN A KING'S SPEECH.

MY DEAR JAMES:

In my first Letter, I observed to you that to the functions of statesmen and legislators was due the highest respect which could be shown by man to anything human; but I, at the same time, observed that, as the degree and quality of our respect rose in proportion to the influence which the different branches of knowledge naturally had in the affairs and on the conditions of men, so, in cases of imperfection in knowledge, or of negligence in the application of it, or of its perversion to bad purposes, all the feelings opposite to that of respect rose in the same proportion; and to one of these cases I have now to direct your attention.

The speeches of the king are read by him to the Parliament. They are composed by his ministers or select councillors. They are documents of great importance, treating of none but weighty matters; they are always styled *Most Gracious*, and are heard and answered with the most profound respect.

The persons who settle upon what shall be the topics of these speeches, and who draw the speeches up, are a Lord High Chancellor, a First Lord of the Treasury, a Lord President of the Council, three Secretaries of State, a First Lord of the Admiralty, a Master General of the Ordnance, a Chancellor of the Exchequer, and perhaps one or two besides. These persons are called, when spoken of in a body, *the Ministry*. They are all members of the king's constitutional council, called the *Privy Council*, without whose assent the king can issue no proclamation nor any order affecting the people. This council, Judge Blackstone, taking the words of Coke, calls

"a noble, honorable, and reverend assembly." So that, in the Ministry, who are *selected* from the persons who compose this assembly, the nation has a right to expect something very near to perfection in point of judgment and of practical talent.

How destitute of judgment and of practical talent these persons have been, in the capacity of statesmen and of legislators, the present miserable and perilous state of England amply demonstrates; and I am now about to show you that they are equally destitute in the capacity of writers. There is some poet who says,

"Of all the arts in which the learn'd excel,  
The first in rank is that of *writing well*." \*

And though a man may possess great knowledge, as a statesman and as a legislator, without being able to perform what this poet would call *writing well*; yet, surely, we have a right to expect in a *minister* the capacity of being able to write *grammatically*; the capacity of putting his own meaning clearly down upon paper. But, in the composing of a king's speech, it is not *one* man, but *nine* men, whose judgment and practical talent are employed. A king's speech is, too, a very *short* piece of writing. The topics are all distinct. Very little is said upon each. There is no reasoning. It is all plain matter of fact, or of simple observation. The thing is done with all the advantages of abundant time for examination and re-examination. Each of the ministers has a copy of the speech to read, to examine, and to observe upon; and when no one has anything left to suggest in the way of alteration or improvement, the speech is agreed to, and put into the mouth of the king.

Surely, therefore, if in any human effort perfection can be expected, we have a right to expect it in a king's

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\* Of all those arts in which the wise excel,  
Nature's chief masterpiece is writing well.  
*Sheffield, Earl of Buckinghamshire.*

speech. You shall now see, then, what pretty stuff is put together, and delivered to the Parliament, under the name of king's speeches.

The speech which I am about to examine is, indeed, a speech of the regent; but I might take any other of these speeches. I choose this particular speech because the subjects of it are familiar in America as well as in England. It was spoken on the 8th of November, 1814. I shall take a sentence at a time, in order to avoid confusion.

“My Lords and Gentlemen: It is with *deep regret* that *I am again obliged* to announce the continuance of his majesty's lamented indisposition.”

Even in this short sentence there is something *equivocal*; for it *may* be that the prince's regret arises from *his being obliged* to announce, and not from the thing announced. If he had said, “With deep regret I announce,” or, “I announce with deep regret,” there would have been nothing equivocal. And, in a composition like this, all ought to be as clear as the pebbled brook.

“It *would have given* me great satisfaction to *have been enabled* to communicate to you the *termination* of the war between this country and the United States of America.”

The double compound times of the verbs, in the first part of the sentence, make the words mean that it would, *before the prince came to the House*, have given him great satisfaction *to be* enabled to communicate; whereas he meant, “It would *now* have given me great satisfaction *to be enabled* to communicate.” In the latter part of the sentence we have a little nonsense. What does *termination* mean? It means, in this case, *end* or *conclusion*; and thus the prince wished to *communicate an end* to the wise men by whom he was surrounded! To communicate is to *impart* to another any thing that we have in our possession or within our power. And so, the prince wished to *impart* the *end* to the noble lords and honorable gentlemen. He might wish to impart, or communicate

the *news*, or the *intelligence* of the *end*; but he could not *communicate* the *end* itself. What should we say, if some one were to tell us, that an officer had arrived, and *brought* home the termination of a battle, and *carried* it to Carlton House and *communicated* it to the prince? We should laugh at our informant's ignorance of grammar, though we should understand what he meant. And, shall we, then, be so partial and so unjust as to reverence in king's councillors that which we should laugh at in one of our neighbors? To act thus would be, my dear son, a base abandonment of our reason, which is, to use the words of Dr. Watts, the common gift of God to man.

"*Although* this war originated in *the most* unprovoked aggression on the part of *the Government* of the United States, and was calculated to promote the designs of the common enemy of Europe against the rights and independence of *all other nations*, I never have ceased to entertain a sincere desire to bring it to a conclusion on *just and honorable terms*."

The *the most* would lead us to suppose that there had been *more than one* aggression, and that the war originated in the most unprovoked *of them*; whereas the prince's meaning was that the aggression was *an* unprovoked one, unprovoked in the superlative degree; and that, therefore, it was *a most* unprovoked aggression. The words *all other nations* may mean all nations *except England*; or, all nations *out of Europe*; or, all nations *other than the United States*; or, all nations *except the enemy's own nation*. Guess you which of these is the meaning; I confess that I am wholly unable to determine the question. But, what does the close of the sentence mean when taken into view with the *although* at the beginning? Does the prince mean that he would be justified in wanting to make peace on *unjust* and *dishonorable* terms *because* the enemy had been the aggressor? He might, indeed, wish to make it on terms

dishonorable, and even disgraceful, to the enemy; but could he possibly wish to make it on *unjust* terms? Does he mean that an aggression, however wicked and unprovoked, would give him a *right* to do *injustice*? Yet, if he do not mean this, what does he mean? Perhaps (for there is no certainty) he may mean that he wishes to bring the war to a conclusion as soon as he can get *just and honorable terms from the enemy*; but, then, what is he to do with the *although*? Let us try this: "I am ready," say you, "to make peace, *if you will give me just terms, although you are the aggressor.*" To be sure you are, *whether I be the aggressor or not!* All that you can possibly have the face to ask of me is *justice*; and, therefore, why do you connect your wish for peace with this *although*? Either you mean that my aggression gives you a *right* to demand of me *more than justice*, or you talk *nonsense*. Nor must we overlook the word "*government*," which is introduced here. In the sentence before, the prince wished to communicate the end of the war between "*this country and the United States*;" but in this sentence we are at war with "*the Government of the United States*." This was a poor trick of sophistry, and as such we will let it pass; only observing that such low trickery is not very becoming in men selected from "*a noble, honorable, and reverend assembly.*"

"I am *still* engaged in negotiations for this purpose."

That is, the purpose of bringing the war to a conclusion. A very good purpose; but why *still*? He had not told his nobles and his boroughmen that he *had been* engaged in negotiations. Even this short, simple sentence could not be made without fault.

"The success of them must, however, depend on my *disposition* being met *with* corresponding *sentiments* on the part of the enemy."

Now, suppose I were to say, "My wagon was met *with* Mr. Tredwell's coach." Would you not think that some-



body had met the wagon and coach, both going together the same way? To be sure you would. But if I were to say, "My wagon was met *by* Mr. Tredwell's coach," you would think that they had approached each other from different spots. And, therefore, the prince should have said, "met *by*." This sentence, however, short as it happily is, is too long to be content with one error. *Disposition*, in this sense of the word, means *state*, or *bent*, or *temper*, of *mind*; and the word *sentiments* means *thoughts*, or *opinions*. So, here we have a *temper of mind* met by *thoughts*. Thoughts may correspond or agree with a temper of mind; but how are they to *meet it*? If the prince had said, "My disposition being met *by* a corresponding disposition on the part of the enemy," he would have uttered plain and dignified language.

"The operations of his majesty's forces *by sea and land in the Chesapeake*, in the course of the present year, have been attended with most brilliant and successful results."

Were there only the *bad placing* of the different members of this sentence, the fault would be sufficient. But we do not know whether the prince means *operations by sea and land*, or *forces by sea and land*.

It seems to me there is another error here. The prince speaks of operations of "forces by sea and land in the Chesapeake." The Chesapeake is a bay. How can there be operations of forces by land *in the Chesapeake*? Does he mean the operations of the forces when they got to the bottom of the bay?

"The flotilla of *the enemy* in the Patuxent has been destroyed. The signal defeat of *their* land forces enabled a detachment of his majesty's army to take possession of the city of Washington; and the spirit of enterprise, which has characterized all the movements in this quarter, has produced on the inhabitants a *deep* and *sensible* impression of the calamities of a war in which they have been so wantonly involved."

*Enemy* is not a noun of multitude, like *gang* or *House of Commons*, or *den of thieves*; and, therefore, when used in the singular, must have singular pronouns and verbs to agree with it. *Their*, in the second of these sentences, should have been *his*. A *sensible* impression is an impression *felt*; a *deep* impression is one *more felt*. Therefore it was "a *sensible* and *deep* impression." But, indeed, *sensible* had no business there; for an impression that is deep *must be* sensible. What would you think of a man who should say, "I have not only been *stabbed*, but *my skin has been cut*?" Why, you would think, to be sure, that he must be a man selected from the noble, honorable, and reverend assembly at Whitehall!

"The expedition directed from Halifax to the northern coast of the United States has terminated in a manner *not less satisfactory*."

Than *what*? The prince has told us, before this, of nothing that has terminated satisfactorily: He has talked of a brilliant result, and of an impression made on the inhabitants; but of *no termination* has he talked; nor has he said a word about *satisfaction*. We must always take care how we use, in one sentence, words which refer to anything said in former sentences.

"The successful course of this operation *has been followed* by the *immediate* submission of the extensive and important district east of the Penobscot river to his majesty's arms."

This sentence is a disgrace even to a ministry with a JENKINSON at its head. What do they mean by *a course* being *followed* by a *submission*? And then, "*has been followed* by the *immediate* submission?" One would think that some French emigrant priest was employed to write this speech. He, indeed, would say, "*à été suivie* par la soumission immédiate." But when we make use of any word like *immediate*, which carries us back to the time and scene of action, we must use the *past time* of

the verb, and say, "*was* followed by the *immediate* submission." That is to say, *was then* followed by the *then* immediate; and not has *now* been followed by the *then* immediate submission. The close of this sentence exhibits a fine instance of want of skill in the *placing* of the parts of a sentence. Could these noble and reverend persons find no place but the *end* for "*to his majesty's arms?*" There was, but they could not see it, a place made on purpose, after the word *submission*.

It is unnecessary, my dear James, for me to proceed further with an exposure of the bad grammar and the nonsense of this speech. There is not, in the whole speech, one single sentence that is free from error. Nor will you be at all surprised at this, if ever you should hear those persons uttering their *own* speeches in those places which, when you were a naughty little boy, you used to call the "*Thieves' Houses*." If you should ever hear them there, stammering and repeating and putting forth their nonsense, your wonder will be, not that they wrote a king's speech so badly, but that they contrived to put upon paper sentences sufficiently grammatical to enable us to guess at the meaning.

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## LETTER XXIII.

### ON PUTTING SENTENCES TOGETHER, AND ON FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE.

MY DEAR JAMES:

I have now done with the subject of grammar, which, as you know, teaches us to use *words* in a proper manner. But though you now, I hope, understand how to avoid error in the forming of sentences, I think it right not to conclude my instructions without saying a few words upon the subject of adding sentence to sentence, and on the subject of *figurative language*.

Language is made use of for one of three purposes; namely, to *inform*, to *convince*, or to *persuade*. The first, requiring merely the talent of telling what we know, is a matter of little difficulty. The second demands *reasoning*. The third, besides reasoning, demands all the aid that we can obtain from the use of figures of speech, or, as they are sometimes called, *figures of rhetoric*, which last word means the power of persuasion.

Whatever may be the purpose for which we use language, it seldom can happen that we do not stand in need of more than one sentence; and, therefore, others must be added. There is no precise *rule*; there can be no precise rule, with regard to the manner of doing this. When we have said one thing, we must add another; and so on, until we have said all that we have to say. But we ought to take care, and great care, that if any words in a sentence relate, in any way, to words that have *gone before*, we make these words correspond grammatically with those foregoing words; an instance of the want of which care you have seen in paragraph 178.

The *order* of the matter will be, in almost all cases, that of your thoughts. Sit down *to write what you have thought*, and not *to think what you shall write*. Use the first words that occur to you, and never attempt to *alter a thought*; for that which has come of itself into your mind is likely to pass into that of another more readily and with more effect than anything which you can, by reflection, invent.

Never stop to *make choice of words*. Put down your thought in words just as they come. Follow the order which your thought will point out; and it will push you on to get it upon the paper as quickly and as clearly as possible.

Thoughts come much faster than we can put them upon paper. They produce one another: and the order of their coming is, in almost every case, the best possible

order that they can have on paper; yet, if you have several in your mind, rising above each other in point of force, the most forcible will naturally come the last upon paper.

Mr. Lindley Murray gives *rules* about *long sentences* and *short sentences*, and about a *due mixture* of long and short; and he also gives rules about the *letters* that sentences should *begin* with, and the *syllables* that they should *end* with. Such rules might be very well if we were to *sing* our writing; but when the use of writing is to *inform*, to *convince*, or to *persuade*, what can it have to do with such rules?

There are certain *connecting words* which it is of importance to use properly; such as *therefore*, which means *for that cause*, *for that reason*. We must take care, when we use such words, that there is *occasion for using them*. We must take care that when we use *but*, or *for*, or any other connecting word, the sense of our sentences requires such word to be used; for, if such words be improperly used, they throw all into confusion. You have seen the shameful effect of an *although* in the king's speech, which I noticed in my last Letter. The adverbs *when*, *then*, *while*, *now*, *there*, and some others, are connecting words, and not used in their strictly literal sense. For example: "Well, *then*, I will not do it." *Then*, in its literal sense, means, *at that time*, or *in that time*; as, "I was in America *then*." But "Well, *then*," means, "Well, *if that be so*," or "*let that be so*," or "*in that case*." You have only to accustom yourself a little to reflect on the *meaning* of these words; for that will soon teach you never to employ them improperly.

A writing, or written discourse, is generally broken into *paragraphs*. When a new paragraph should begin, the nature of your thoughts must tell you. The propriety of it will be pointed out to you by the difference between the thoughts that are coming and those which have gone

before. It is impossible to frame rules for regulating such divisions. When a man divides his work into Parts, Books, Chapters, and Sections, he makes the division according to that which the matter has taken in his mind; and, when he comes to write, he has no other guide for the distribution of his matter into sentences and paragraphs.

*Never write about any matter that you do not well understand.* If you clearly understand all about your matter, you will never want thoughts, and thoughts instantly become words.

One of the greatest of all faults in writing and in speaking is this: the using of many words to *say little*. In order to guard yourself against this fault, inquire what is the *substance* or *amount* of what you have said. Take a long speech of some talking lord, and put down upon paper what the amount of it is. You will most likely find that the *amount* is very small; but, at any rate, when you get it, you will then be able to examine it, and to tell what it is worth. A very few examinations of this sort will so frighten you, that you will be forever after upon your guard against *talking a great deal* and *saying little*.

*Figurative language* is very fine when properly employed; but figures of rhetoric are edge-tools, and two-edged tools, too. Take care how you touch them! They are called *figures*, because they represent other things than the words in their literal meaning stand for. For instance: "The tyrants oppress and starve the people. The people would live amidst abundance, if those *cormorants* did not devour the fruit of their labor." I shall only observe to you, upon this subject, that, if you use figures of rhetoric, you ought to take care that they do not make nonsense of what you say; nor excite the ridicule of those to whom you write. Mr. Murray, in an address to his students, tells them "that he is about to offer them some advice with regard to their future *walks*

in the *paths* of literature." Now, though a man may *take a walk* along a *path*, a walk means also *the ground* laid out in a certain shape, and such a walk is *wider than a path*. He, in another part of this address, tells them that they are in the *morning* of life, and that that is the *season* for exertion. The morning, my dear James, is *not a season*. The *year*, indeed, has seasons, but the day has none. If he had said the *spring* of life, then he might have added the *season* of exertion. I told you they were *edge-tools*. Beware of them.

I am now, my dear son, arrived at the last paragraph of my treatise, and I hope that, when you arrive at it, you will understand grammar sufficiently to enable you to write without committing frequent and glaring errors. I shall now leave you, for about four months, to read and write English; to practise what you have now been taught. At the end of those four months I shall have prepared a Grammar to teach you the *French language*, which language I hope to hear you speak, and to see you write well, at the end of one year from this time. With English and French on your tongue and in your pen, you have a resource not only greatly valuable in itself, but a resource that you can be deprived of by none of those changes and chances which deprive men of pecuniary possessions, and which, in some cases, make the purse-proud man of yesterday the crawling sycophant to-day. Health, without which life is not worth having, you will hardly fail to secure by early rising, exercise, sobriety, and abstemiousness as to food. Happiness, or misery, is in the *mind*. It is the mind that lives; and the length of life ought to be measured by the number and importance of our ideas, and not by the number of our days. Never, therefore, esteem men merely on account of their riches or their station. Respect goodness, find it where you may. Honor talent wherever you behold it unassociated with vice; but honor it most when accompanied with exertion,

and especially when exerted in the cause of truth and justice; and, above all things, hold it in honor when it steps forward to protect defenceless innocence against the attacks of powerful guilt.

It is true that figures are edge-tools; but even edge-tools are perfectly safe in the hands of those who know how to use them. And with a little care and attention, anybody of common understanding may learn how to use the ordinary figures of rhetoric, which are powerful auxiliaries in rendering speech effective. There is nothing that impresses like figures. They are edge-tools in another sense; for they cut like swords and wound like daggers. Daniel O'Connell once silenced a troublesome opponent by suddenly turning on him and exclaiming: "Sit down, you pestiferous ramcat!" Lord Chatham finely designates the corrupt government contractor and jobber as "that blood-sucker, that muck-worm that calls himself 'the friend of government.'" "One should never take a vacation till the sexton gives him one," is far more forcible than "One should never cease working till death." Instead of saying that one must not express high, noble thoughts before low, vulgar people, how much more expressive it is to say, "Do not cast pearls before swine." When Daniel Webster said of Alexander Hamilton, "He smote the rock of the national resources, and abundant streams of revenue burst forth; he touched the dead corpse of public credit, and it sprang upon its feet!" he uttered something far more impressive, far more forcible and beautiful, than if he had merely declared that Hamilton had improved the finances and strengthened the public credit of the country. Everybody, the most illiterate as well as the most learned, uses figures. The illiterate man uses them unconsciously; and so does the learned man in the ardor of speech; in fact, most people use them, and ought to use them, unconsciously; that is, without thinking that they are using figures. When a person exclaims, on seeing a large, fat man coming along, "Here comes Jumbo!" he never thinks that he is using a figure; and I have no doubt that even Cobbett himself, when he said that figures are edge-tools, never suspected that he was using a figure. Our greatest writers, especially the poets, are full of figures. Shakspeare bristles with them; his works have more figures, and more happily-used figures, than perhaps those of any other author. In *Macbeth* alone there are figures of almost every description. Just count the figures in the murder scene and in the interview between



Macbeth and his wife after the murder, and you will be amazed at their number and variety.

Of course, I do not pretend, in these few words at the end of the book, to teach you all about figures of rhetoric; but I wish to give you an *idea* of what they are, that you may not be entirely ignorant of the matter.

Though rhetoricians give names to a great number of deviations from the ordinary mode of expression, there are just about a dozen figures of rhetoric whose nature and use are worth studying. The others are common turnings and windings in language, in which nobody ever makes a mistake; but which, closely regarded, are made out to be figures, and dubbed with hard Greek names, the knowledge of which is of no possible use. Hence Butler's famous couplet:

" For all a rhetorician's rules  
Teach nothing but to name his tools."

Of these dozen figures, the most common are the METAPHOR and the SIMILE. Definitions are hard, and sometimes very unsatisfactory; but when I say that the sentence "Doctor Johnson was a gnarled oak" contains a metaphor, and that the sentence "Doctor Johnson was like a gnarled oak" contains a simile, you will see at once what both are. "He is a lion," contains a metaphor; "he is like a lion" contains a simile. The metaphor is sometimes called an abridged simile, for it is *putting* one thing for another which it resembles, instead of saying it is *like* it. The simile is always introduced by the words *like*, or *so*, or words of similar import. "Charity, like the sun, brightens all it shines upon. A metaphor, like a beam of light, brightens and enlivens its object whenever it is used." When somebody cried out at the battle of Quebec, "They fly! they fly!" and General Wolff asked, "Who fly?" both used a figure; for men can only flee, not fly. When a little boy calls out, "Look at that frog! I will let this stone fly at his head!" he uses a figure; so that, long before he knows what metaphors are, he learns to use them rightly enough. Look at Coleridge's sentences about Cobbett, on page 210 of the *Life*, and you will find quite a number of metaphors.

There is another figure, called METONYMY, which looks, at first sight, like the metaphor; but which, on closer inspection, will be found to be essentially different. While the metaphor is really a departure from the ordinary form of speech, metonymy, which is termed a change of names, is one of the most ordinary expressions. "The kettle boils; the lamp burns; he smokes his pipe." Now, is

it the *kettle* that boils, or the *water* in it? the *lamp* that burns, or the *oil*? We use these expressions without ever thinking that we are using figurative language; for it is not a departure from the ordinary form of speech; it is everyday speech, everyday and common language. But, when we say, "Experience is the lamp by which my feet are guided;" or "We shall never light the pipe of peace until our rights are restored;" or "This was the rock on which he split;" the language rises at once in force and impressiveness, and we feel that there is a deviation from the common mode of expression. The former is metonymy, and the latter metaphor. "He is fond of his bottle; he drank three glasses; he keeps a good table;" these, you see, are merely a change of names. "The gin-palace is the recruiting-shop for the penitentiary; Senator Conkling sawed off the limb on which he sat; the politicians are hungry for office, for they have been fasting for twenty years;" these are metaphors, and you see they convey a picture to the mind which no other words can convey so well.

AN ALLEGORY is a sort of continued metaphor, by which an imaginary history with a veiled meaning may be told. Macaulay says Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is the finest allegory which has been produced in two thousand years. For another fine example, see 80th Psalm.

PERSONIFICATION is the giving of life to inanimate things, or the giving of speech and reason to objects, insects, and animals, as in fables. Cobbett's story of the quarrel in the pot-shop has good examples of this figure. To personify is to speak, for instance, of winter and war as of a man; of spring and peace as of a woman. "Lo! steel-clad War his gorgeous standard rears!"

"How sleep the brave, who sink to rest  
By all their country's wishes blest!  
When *Spring*, with dewy fingers cold,  
Returns to deck their hallowed mould,  
*She* there shall dress a sweeter sod  
Than *Fancy's* feet have ever trod."

There is another form of personification, a lower form, in which we give the qualities of beings to inanimate objects: we sometimes speak of a *raging* storm, a *cruel* disease, a *remorseless* sword, a *scornful* lip, a *dying* lamp, the *smiling* harvest, the *thirsty* ground, a *fearless* pen, the *babbling* brook.

SYNECODOCHE is taking a part for the whole, or the whole for a part; as, He has a *keen eye*; he has seen *eighty winters*; *all the world* runs after him.

INTERROGATION is asking a question which does not need an

answer; as, Can any man count the stars? Will not the Judge of all the earth do right? This is a favorite figure in oratory.

EXCLAMATION is the uttering of some expression of surprise, or of some emotion of the mind; as, What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! Would that some good angel had put Cobbett's grammar into that boy's hands!

IRONY is saying the opposite of what one means; as, Cobbett was remarkable for his meekness and humility! John Bull's Address to Brother Jonathan (par. 214) is a good example. See also page 193 of the Life. Here is another example:

"So goes the world;—if wealthy, you may call  
*This*, friend; *that*, brother;—friends and brothers all.  
 Though you are worthless, witless; never mind it:  
 You may have been a stable-boy—what then?  
*'Tis wealth*, good sir, makes *honorable men*."

ANTITHESIS is the comparing or placing in contrast of opposite qualities; as, Though poor, yet proud; though submissive, gay. The prodigal robs his heir, the miser robs himself. Antithesis is closely allied to epigram, which is a short, pithy saying; as, When you have nothing to say, say it. Wendell Phillips is noted for his epigrammatic style.

HYPERBOLE is some extravagant expression, employed to heighten the impression conveyed. Macbeth says that the great ocean will not wash his hand clean from the blood-stains on it, but that his hand will rather incarnadine the great ocean; while Lady Macbeth says that "all the sweets of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand." Antony's declaration that if he were an orator like Brutus, he would "make the stones of Rome rise in mutiny," is another good example. "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes," is the Psalmist's fine figure.

APOSTROPHE is a sudden turning off from the subject of discourse to address some absent or dead person or thing as present. When the news of Lord Byron's death came to England, John Jay, the famous preacher, spoke of him and his works in his pulpit; then he suddenly turned and addressed him as if he were present: "O Byron, hadst thou listened to the words of soberness and truth; hadst thou followed the counsels of the wise and good; hadst thou repressed thy passions, formed nobler aims and pursued a nobler ideal of life, what a different tale we would have had to tell! what a different example, for all generations, thy life would have afforded!" His apostrophe was something like this; it is twenty-five years since I read it, I give it as I remember it; I

only know it made a deep impression on me at the time. And Byron himself, in his wonderful *Childe Harold*, gives us perhaps the finest apostrophe in our language. He is speaking of the ocean, when he suddenly turns and addresses it in those noble lines beginning:

“Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean—roll!  
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain.  
Man marks the earth with ruin—his control  
Stops with the shore.”

CLIMAX is rising from one point to another till the highest is reached, or descending from one point to another till the lowest is reached. I have read somewhere this capital example, which is said to be from a sermon on Christian progress by a negro preacher: “If you cannot fly, run; if you cannot run, walk; if you cannot walk, crawl; if you cannot crawl, *worm* it along!”

ALLITERATION is the repeating of the same letter at the beginning of each of two or more words in the same line or sentence. One of the characters in Shakespeare’s *Henry VIII* speaks thus of Cardinal Woolsey:

“Begot of butchers and by butchers bred,  
How high his highness holds his haughty head.”

Besides these, there are figures of ETYMOLOGY and figures of SYNTAX. The former are hardly worth mentioning, being simply such changes in words as *o’er* for *over*, *tho’* for *though*, *’gainst* for *against*, *’tis* for *it is*, *withouten* for *without*, *enchain* for *chain*, and a few similar ones, all of which are called by the hardest of Greek names. These figures are simply deviations from the usual orthography of words, and are sometimes called figures of orthography. The figures of syntax are four in number: ELLIPSIS, PLEONASM, ENALLAGE, and HYPERBATON. The first, which has already been explained, consists, you will remember, in leaving understood some word or words; as, “This is the man I mean,” instead of “whom I mean.” Pleonasm is the opposite of this; that is, the using of superfluous words; and the most common example of it is in the use of the word *got*. “What have you got? I have got a book; you have got a horse.” These *gots* may all be left out. The Bible is full of this figure, as indeed of all figures; as, “There shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down. Oh ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth!” Enallage may be said to be the name given to the grammatical mistakes which the poets are allowed to make, on account of the shackles in which they are obliged to walk. In Leigh Hunt’s poem, “The Glove and the Lions,” occur these lines:

**"De Lorge's love o'erheard the king, a beauteous, lively dame,  
With dark bright eyes, which always seemed the same."**

Now, according to the rules of grammar, these lines declare that the king was a beauteous, lively dame; but the poet was obliged to write thus for the sake of the rhyme. This is called enallage. Milton's "Beelzebub than whom" may also be called enallage. Hyperbaton is somewhat similar to inversion, which latter consists in placing the predicate or the object before the subject; as, In came the king; down fell the suppliant; him I adore. Inversion is used to give force and emphasis to an expression; but hyperbaton is simply the transposition of a word or words for the sake of the measure; as, "While its song rolls the woods along," instead of "While its song rolls along the woods."

There is no better example of an awkward blunder in the use of figures than that of the man who prayed that "the word which had been preached might be like a nail driven in a sure place, sending its roots downward and its branches upward, spreading itself like a green bay-tree, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners!" A wonderful nail, indeed, this would be. Lord Cockburn, in his *Memoirs*, tells of a man who, on being asked at a public dinner to give a toast, exclaimed: "Here's to the moon, shining on the calm bosom of a lake!" The man thought, no doubt, that he was saying something figurative and fine. Franklin, in a toast he gave at a diplomatic dinner at Versailles, made use of the sun and moon in a very different manner. The British minister began with: "George III, who, like the sun in his meridian, spreads a luster throughout and enlightens the world." The French minister followed with: "Louis XVI, who, like the moon, sheds his mild and benignant rays on and influences the globe." Then our American Franklin gave: "George Washington, commander of the American army, who, like Joshua of old, commanded the sun and the moon to stand still, and they obeyed him!" Never were simile and metaphor more happily combined.

I cannot help thinking that, when Cobbett called figures double-edged tools, he had in mind the mischief which some of his own figures had played with himself on certain occasions. His likening of Doctor Rush to Doctor Sangrado cost him \$5,000; his declaration that the appointment of Lord Hardwicke to the vice-royalty of Ireland was "putting the surgeon's apprentice to bleeding the hospital patients," cost him £500; and his comparison of Castlereagh's discipline of British troops to Napoleon's discipline of his conscripts, cost him £1,000 and an imprisonment of two years. Dog-

berry found comparisons "odorous;" Cobbett found them very expensive and very injurious. Defoe's figures served him even still worse; for his sarcastic irony in "The Shortest Way with the Dissenters" cost him his ears, exposure in the pillory, and the loss of his liberty for two years. The remorseless metaphor which Brougham applied to Canning, that he was guilty of the "most monstrous tergiversation [shuffling, shifting, twisting, turning] for office," caused that statesman, it is said, to take to his bed, and never to rise from it.

## VERSIFICATION

Now comes that mysterious matter, which I promised, at the beginning of the book, to give you an account of, versification. I said it is a simple matter; so it is; and yet many persons look upon it as something very complicated, far too difficult for common people to learn, and never studied by anybody but poets.

Verse is of two kinds, rhyme and blank verse. Rhyme consists of measured lines, every two of which ending with words or syllables of a similar sound; blank verse consists of lines with measure but no rhyme. Shakespeare's tragedies and Milton's *Paradise Lost* are in blank verse; Butler's *Hudibras* and Pope's translation of the *Iliad*—indeed almost all Pope's poems—are in rhyme. Blank verse gives the poet much more freedom and ease in the expression of his thoughts than rhyme; consequently our noblest poetry is in this form.

Although there are many kinds of measure or meter, there are rarely to be found in English poetry more than four kinds. These four are: the iambic, trochaic, anapestic, and dactylic measures; all hard names, but meaning easy things. Now, what makes these measures easy to learn is, that they go in pairs, and each one in each pair is the contrary or the opposite of the other.

Each line of poetry consists of a certain number of feet—and you may have them from one foot up to ten feet—and each foot consists of either two or three syllables. A foot in iambic measure is called an iambus; in trochaic measure, a trochee; in anapestic measure, an anapest; in dactylic measure, a dactyl. Now the iambus and the trochee are feet of two syllables, and the anapest and the dactyl are feet of three syllables. The two syllables of the iambus are short-long; as, re-call', at-tend'. The two syllables of the trochee are long-short; as, ho'-ly, cy'-press. Therefore you see that the one is the opposite of the other. Counting the feet in a line of poetry, or pausing after each foot as you go along, is

called *scanning*. Now scan me the following verse, and tell me whether it is in iambic or trochaic measure :

The cur | few tolls | the knell | of part | ing day ;  
 The low | ing herd | winds slow | ly o'er | the lea ;  
 The plough | man home | ward plods | his wea | ry way,  
 And leaves | the world | to dark | ness and | to me.

*Gray's Elegy in a Country Churchyard.*

Now tell me if the following stanza is in the same measure .

Once up | on a | mid-night | drea-ry,  
 While I | pgn-der'd | weak and | wea-ry,  
 O-ver | many a | quaint and | cu-rious | vol-ume  
 Of for | got-ten | lore,  
 While I | nod-ded | near-ly | nap-ping,  
 Sud-den | ly there | came a | tap-ping,  
 As of | some one | gent-ly | rap-ping,  
 Rap-ping | at my | cham-ber | door.—*Poe's Raven.*

You see that in the first stanza the tone falls always on the second syllable, while in the second the tone falls always on the first. The first stanza, therefore, is in the iambic measure, and the second in the trochaic.

Now the other two measures are also opposites. Mark the following verse, and tell me whether it is made up of *short-short-long* feet (anapestic), or *long-short-short* feet (dactylic):

The As-syr | ian came down | like the wolf | on the fold,  
 And his co | horts were gleam | ing in pur | ple and gold ;  
 And the sheen | of their spears | was like stars | on the sea  
 When the blue | wave rolls night | ly on deep | Ga-li-lee.

*Byron's Destruction of Sennacherib.*

Now observe that the feet in the following verse are the opposite or the reverse of the preceding :

Bird of the | wil-der-ness,  
 Blithe-some and | cum-ber-less,  
 Sweet be thy | ma-tin o'er | moor-land and | lea !  
 Em-blem of | hap-pi-ness,  
 Blest is thy | dwell-ing place—  
 Oh to a | bide in the | des-ert with | thee !

*The Lark, by James Hogg.*

The first of these last two stanzas is, therefore, in anapestic measure, and the second in dactylic. So that the four verses represent the iambic, the trochaic, the anapestic, and the dactylic measure; and you should learn all four by heart, as a guide in enabling you to determine the measure of other poems. Something that will help you to remember the dactylic measure is the derivation of the word dactyl, which is a Greek word signifying

*finger*. Now look at your forefinger, and see if it does not consist of *one long joint* and *two short ones* (cum'ber-less). So that I may say—although it sounds like an Irish bull—that this *foot* is so called because it is like a *finger*.

Of all the poems in the English language, nine out of ten are in the iambic measure, which is no doubt because that measure is most suited to the nature of our language. Poor Lord Surrey—who seems to have been a noble, chivalric character, something like Sidney; beheaded in the flower of his age by the brutal Henry VIII.—was the first to write in this measure. Nearly all our dramatic and epic poetry, in fact nearly all our great poems, are in this measure. All Shakespeare's blank-verse plays, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Pope's *Homer*, Spenser's *Faery Queene*, Butler's *Hudibras*, and Bryant's *Thanatopsis* are in iambic measure. There is only one thing more to be said, and that is, that you will sometimes find a mixture of these various measures in one and the same poem; but some one measure is, however, usually so predominant as to give a character to the verse. Verse means poetry in general, but one single line of poetry is also called a verse.



## THE SIX LESSONS.

## LETTER XXIV.

SIX LESSONS, INTENDED TO PREVENT STATESMEN FROM USING FALSE GRAMMAR, AND FROM WRITING IN AN AWKWARD MANNER.

*Harpenden, Hertfordshire, June 23, 1822.*

MY DEAR JAMES:

In my first Letter, I observed that it was of the greatest importance that *statesmen*, above all others, should be able to *write well*. It happens, however, but too frequently, that that which should be, in this case as well as in others, is not; sufficient proof of which you will find in the remarks which I am now about to make. The *Letter to Tierney*—a thing which I foresaw would become of great and lasting importance; a thing to which I knew I should frequently have to recur with satisfaction—I wrote on the anniversary of the day on which, in the year 1810, I was sentenced to be imprisoned for two years, to pay a fine of a thousand pounds, and to be held in bonds of five thousand pounds for seven years, for having publicly, and in print, expressed my indignation at the flogging of English local-militia men in the town of Ely, under a guard of German soldiers. I thought of this at a time when I saw those events approaching which I was certain would, by fulfilling my predictions, bring me a compensation for the unmerited sufferings and insults heaped upon me with so unsparing a hand. For writing the present little work, I select the anniversary of a day which your excellent conduct makes me regard as amongst the most blessed in the calendar. Who, but myself, can imagine what I felt when I left you behind me at New

York! Let this tell my persecutors that *you* have made me more than amends for all the losses, all the fatigue, all the dangers, and all the anxieties attending that exile of which their baseness and injustice were the cause.

The bad writing, on which I am about to remark, I do not pretend to look on as the *cause* of the present public calamities, or of any part of them; but it is a proof of a *deficiency in that sort of talent* which appears to me to be necessary in men intrusted with great affairs. He who writes badly thinks badly. Confusedness in words can proceed from nothing but confusedness in the thoughts which give rise to them. These things may be of trifling importance when the actors move in private life; but when the happiness of millions of men is at stake, they are of an importance not easily to be described.

The pieces of writing that I am about to comment on I deem *bad writing*; and, as you will see, the writing may be bad, though there may be no *grammatical* error in it. The best writing is that which is best calculated to secure the object of the writer; and the worst, that which is the least likely to effect that purpose. But it is not in this extended sense of the words that I am now going to consider any writing. I am merely about to give specimens of badly-written papers, as a warning to the statesmen of the present day; and as proofs, in addition to those which you have already seen, that we ought not to conclude that a man has great abilities merely because he receives great sums of the public money.

The specimens, that I shall give, consist of papers that relate to measures and events of the very first importance. The first is the speech of the Speaker of the House of Commons to the regent, at the close of the first session of 1819, during which Mr. Peel's, or the Cash-Payment, Bill had been passed; the second is the answer of the regent to that speech; the first is the work of the House; the second that of the ministry.

In Letter XII, I gave the reasons why we had a right to expect perfection in writings of this description. I there described the persons to whom the business of writing king's speeches belongs. The Speaker of the House of Commons is to be taken as the man of the greatest talent in that House. He is called the "First Commoner of England." Figure to yourself, then, the king on his throne, in the House of Lords; the lords standing in their robes; the Commons coming to the bar, with the Speaker at their head, gorgeously attired, with the mace held beside him; figure this scene to yourself, and you will almost think it sedition and blasphemy to suppose it possible that the speech made to the king, or that his majesty's answer, both prepared and written down long beforehand, should be anything short of perfection. Follow me, then, my dear son, through this Letter; and you will see that we are not to judge of men's talents by the dresses they wear, by the offices they fill, or by the power they possess.

After these two papers, I shall take some papers written by *Lord Castlereagh*, by the *Duke of Wellington*, and by the *Marquis Wellesley*. These are three of those persons who have, of late years, made the greatest figure in our affairs with foreign nations. The transactions which have been committed to their management have been such as were hardly ever exceeded in point of magnitude, whether we look at the transactions themselves or at their natural consequences. How much more fit than other men they were to be thus confided in; how much more fit to have the interest and honor of a great nation committed to their hands, you will be able to judge when you shall have read my remarks on those of their papers to which I have here alluded.

In the making of my comments, I shall insert the several papers, a paragraph or two, or more, at a time; and I shall *number* the paragraphs for the purpose of more easy reference.

## LESSON I.

*Remarks on the Speech of the Speaker of the House of Commons to the Prince Regent, which Speech was made at the close of the first Session of 1819, during which Session Peel's Bill was passed.*

“ May it please your Royal Highness,

1. “ We, his Majesty's faithful Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in Parliament assembled, attend your Royal Highness with our concluding Bill of Supply.

2. “ The subjects which have occupied our attention have been more numerous, more *various* and more important, *than are* usually submitted to the consideration of Parliament in *the same* Session.”

It is difficult to say what is meant, in Paragraph No. 2, by the word *various*. The Speaker had already said that the *subjects* were more *numerous*, which was quite enough; for they necessarily *differed* from each other, or they were one and the same; and, therefore, the word *various* can in this place have no meaning at all, unless it mean that the subjects were *variegated* in themselves, which would be only one degree above sheer nonsense.

Next comes the “*than are*,” without a nominative case. Chambermaids, indeed, write in this way, and, in such a case, “the dear unintelligible scrawl” is, as the young rake says in the play, “ten thousands times more charming” than correct writing; but from a Speaker in his robes we might have expected “*than those which* are usually submitted.”

And what does the Speaker mean by “in *the same* Session?” He may mean “in *one and* the same Session;” but what business had the word *same* there at all? Could he not have said, “during *one* Session,” or “during a *single* Session?”

3. “ Upon many of these subjects we have been engaged in long and unwearied *examinations*; but such *has* been the pressure of

other business, and particularly of that which ordinarily belongs to a first Session of Parliament—and such the *magnitude* and *intricacy* of many of *those inquiries*, that the limits of the present Session have not allowed of bringing them to a close.”

There is bad taste, at least, in using the word *examinations* in one part of the sentence, and the word *inquiries* in the other part, especially as the pronoun *those* was used in the latter case. The verb “has” agrees in number with the noun “*pressure*,” but the Speaker, notwithstanding the aid of his wig, was not able to perceive that the same verb did not agree in number with the nouns “*magnitude and intricacy*.” “Such *has* been the pressure, and such *have* been the magnitude *and* intricacy.”

4. “But, Sir, of those measures which we have completed, the most *prominent*, the most important, and, as we trust, in their consequences, the most *beneficial* to the public, are the measures which have grown out of *the consideration* of the present *state of the country*—*both in its currency and its finances*.”

There is not here any positive error in grammar; but there is something a great deal worse; namely, unintelligible words. The epithet “*prominent*” was wholly unnecessary, and only served to inflate the sentence. It would have been prudent not to anticipate, in so marked a manner, *beneficial consequences* from Peel’s Bill; but what are we to understand from the latter part of the sentence? Here are measures *growing out of the consideration of the state of the country in its currency and finances*. What! *The state of the country in its currency*? Or is it *the consideration in its currency*? And what had the word *both* to do there at all? The Speaker meant that the measures had grown out of, or, which would have been much more dignified, had been the result of *a consideration of the present state of the country, with regard to its currency as well as with regard to its finances*.

5. “Early, Sir, in the present Session, we *instituted* an inquiry *into the effects produced on the exchanges with foreign countries*,

*and the* state of the circulating medium, by the restriction on payments in cash *by* the Bank. This inquiry was *most anxiously* and *most deliberately* conducted, and *in its result* led to the *conclusion* that it was most desirable, quickly, but with due precautions, to return to our ancient and *healthful* state of currency:—*That* whatever *might* have been the expediency of the Acts for the suspension of payments of cash at the different periods at which they were enacted (and doubtless they *were expedient*), whilst the country was involved in the most expensive contest that ever weighed down the finances of any country—still *that*, the necessity for the continuance of these Acts having *ceased*, it became us with *as little delay as possible* (avoiding carefully the *convulsion* of *too rapid a transition*) to return to our ancient system; and that, if at any period, and under any circumstances, this return could be effected without national inconvenience, it was *at the present*, when this mighty nation, with a proud retrospect of the past, *after having* made the greatest efforts, and achieved the noblest objects, was *now reposing* in a confident, and, as we *fondly* hope, a well-founded expectation of a *sound and lasting* peace.”

Here, at the beginning of this long and most confused paragraph, are two sentences, perfect rivals in all respects; each has 37 words in it; each has three blunders; and the one is just as obscure as the other. To “*institute*” is to *settle*, to *fix*, to *erect*, to *establish*; and not to *set about* or *undertake*, which was what was done here. If I were to tell you that I have *instituted* an inquiry into the qualities of the Speaker's speech, you would, though I am your father, be almost warranted in calling me an egregious coxcomb. But what are we to make of the “*and the*” further on? Does the Speaker mean that they instituted (since he will have it so) an inquiry *into the state* of the circulating medium, or into the *effects produced on the* circulating medium by the cash suspension? I defy any man living to say which of the two is meant by his *words*. And then we come to “*by the Bank*,” and here the only possible meaning of the words is, that the *restriction* was *imposed by the Bank*; whereas the Speaker means the restriction on payments made *at the Bank*. If *at*, instead

of *by*, had happened to drop out of the wig, this part of the sentence would have been free from error.

As to the second sentence in this Paragraph No. 5, I may first observe on the incongruity of the Speaker's two superlative adverbs. *Anxiously* means *with inquietude*; and *deliberately* means *coolly, slowly, warily*, and the like. The first implies a *disturbed*, the latter a *tranquil*, state of the mind; and a mixture of these it was, it appears, that produced Peel's Bill; this mixture it was which "*in its results, LED to the conclusion*;" that is to say, the result *led* to the *result*; result being conclusion, and conclusion being result. But tautology is, you see, a favorite with this son of the Archbishop of Canterbury, more proofs of which you have yet to witness. And why must the king be compelled to hear the phrase "*healthful* state of the currency," threadbare as it had long before been worn by HORNER and all his tribe of coxcombs of the Edinburgh Review? Would not "*our ancient currency*" have answered every purpose? And would it not have better become the lips of a person in the high station of Speaker of the House of Commons?

The remaining part of this paragraph is such a mass of confusion that one hardly knows where or how to begin upon it. The "*that*" after the *colon* and the *dash* seems to connect it with what has gone before; and yet what connection is there? Immediately after this "*that*" begins a *parenthetical phrase*, which is interrupted by a *parenthesis*, and then the parenthetical phrase goes on again till it comes to a *dash*, after which you come to the words that join themselves to the first "*that*." These words are "*still that*." Then, on goes the parenthetical phrase again till you come to "*it became us*." Then comes more parenthetical matter and another parenthesis; and then comes "*to return to our ancient system*." Take out all the parenthetical matter, and the paragraph will stand thus: "That it was desirable to return to our

ancient and healthful state of currency:—*that*—still *that*, it became us to return to our ancient system.”

But only think of saying “whatever *might* have been the expediency of the acts;” and then to make a parenthesis directly afterwards for the express purpose of positively asserting that they “*were expedient*”! Only think of the necessity for the continuance of the acts having *ceased*, and of its being becoming in the Parliament to return to cash payments *as soon as possible*, and yet that a *convulsion was to* be apprehended from a *too rapid* transition; that is to say, from returning to cash payments *sooner than possible*!

After this comes a doubt whether the thing can be done at all; for we are told that the Parliament, in its wisdom, concluded that, if “*at any period* this return could be effected without *national inconvenience*, it *was* at the *present*.” And then follows that piece of sublime nonsense about the nation's *reposing* in the *fond* (that is, *foolish*) hope of, not only a *lasting*, but also a *sound*, peace. A *lasting* peace would have been enough for a common man; but the son of an Archbishop must have it *sound* as well as *lasting*, or else he would not give a farthing for it.

6. “In considering, Sir, the state of our finances, and in minutely comparing our income with our expenditure, it appeared to us that the excess of our income was not *fairly adequate for* the *purposes* to which it was *applicable*—the gradual reduction of the national debt.

7. “It appeared to us that *a clear available surplus of* at least five millions ought to be set apart for that object.

8. “This, Sir, has been effected by the *additional imposition* of three millions of taxes.”

The word “*fairly*,” in Paragraph No. 6, is a redundancy; it is mere *slang*. “Adequate *for*” ought to be “adequate *to*,” and “*applicable*” is *inapplicable* to the case; for the money was *applicable to any purpose*. It should have been, “the purpose (and not the *purposes*)



for which it was *intended*;" or, "the purpose to which it was intended to be applied."

The 7th Paragraph is a heap of redundant Treasury-slang. Here we have *surplus*; that is to say, an *over*-quantity; but this is not enough for the Speaker, who must have it *clear* also; and not only clear, but *available*; and then he must have it *set apart* into the bargain! Leave out all the words in *italics*, and put *purpose* instead of *object* at the end; and then you have something like common sense as to the words, but still foolish enough as to the political view of the matter.

Even the 8th Paragraph, a simple sentence of fourteen words, could not be free from fault. What does the Speaker mean by an "*additional* imposition"? Did he imagine that the king would be fool enough to believe that the Parliament had *imposed* three millions of taxes without making an *addition* to former impositions? How was the imposition to be *other* than "*additional*?" Why, therefore, cram in this word?

9. "Sir, in adopting this course, his Majesty's faithful Commons did not *conceal from themselves* that *they* were calling upon the nation for a great exertion; but well knowing that *honor*, and *character*, and *independence* have at all times been the *first* and dearest objects of the hearts of Englishmen, *we felt assured* that there was no difficulty that the country could not encounter, and no pressure to which she would not willingly and cheerfully submit, to enable her to maintain, *pure* and *unimpaired*, that which *has* never yet been *shaken* or *sullied*—her public credit *and her national good faith*."

This is a sentence which might challenge the world! Here is, in a small compass, almost every fault that writing can have. The phrase "*conceal from themselves*" is an importation from France, and from one of the worst manufactories too. What is national "*honor*" but national "*character*?" In what do they differ? And what had "*independence*" to do in a case where the subject was the means of paying a debt? Here are *three* things named as

the "*first*" object of Englishmen's hearts. Which was the "*first*" of the three? Or were they the *first three*? To "*feel assured*" is another French phrase. In the former part of the sentence, the Parliament are a *they*; in the latter part they are a *we*. But it is the *figures of rhetoric* which are the great beauties here. First it is *Englishmen* who have such a high sense of *honor* and *character* and *independence*. Next it is the *country*. And next the country becomes a *she*; and in her character of female will submit to any "*pressure*" to enable her to "*maintain*" her *purity*; though scarcely anybody but the sons of Archbishops ever talk about *maintaining* purity, most people thinking that, in such a case, *preserving* is better. Here, however, we have *pure* and *unimpaired*. Now, *pure* applies to things liable to receive *stains* and *adulterations*; *unimpaired*, to things liable to be *undermined*, *dilapidated*, *demolished*, or *worn out*. So the Speaker, in order to make sure of his mark, takes them *both*, and says that the thing which he is about to name, "has never yet been *shaken* or *sullied*"! But what is this fine thing after all? Gad! there are *two* things; namely, "public credit *and* national good faith." So that, leaving the word *good* to go to the long account of redundancy, here is another instance of vulgarly-false grammar; for the two nouns, joined by the conjunction, require the verb *have* instead of *has*.

10. "Thus, Sir, I have *endeavored*, *shortly*, and I am aware *how imperfectly*, to notice the various duties which have devolved upon us, in one of the longest and most arduous sessions *in the records* of Parliament."

11. "The Bill, Sir, which it is my duty to present to your Royal Highness, is entitled, 'An Act for applying certain *monies* therein mentioned for the Service of the year 1819, and for further appropriating the supplies granted in this Session of Parliament.' To which, with all humility, we pray his majesty's royal assent."

Even here, in these common-place sentences, there must be something stupidly illiterate. The Speaker does not

mean that his "*endeavor*" was "*shortly*" made, or made in a *short manner*, but that his *notice* was made in a short manner; and, therefore, it ought to have been, "*to notice shortly*," if *shortly* it must be; yet, surely phraseology less grovelling might have been used on such an occasion. "*In the longest session*," and "*in the records of Parliament*," are colloquial, low and incorrect into the bargain; and as for "*monies*" in the last paragraph, the very sound of the word sends the mind to 'Change Alley, and conjures up before it all the noisy herd of Bulls and Bears.

There is, indeed, one phrase in this whole Speech (that in which the Speaker acknowledges the imperfectness of the manner in which he has performed his task) which would receive our approbation; but the tenor of the speech, the at once flippant and pompous tone of it, the self-conceit that is manifest from the beginning to the end, forbid us to give him credit for sincerity when he confesses his deficiencies, and tell us that the confession is one of those clumsy traps so often used with the hope of catching unmerited applause.

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## LESSON II.

*Remarks on the Speech which the Prince Regent made to the Parliament on the occasion when the above Speech of the Speaker was made.*

"MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN :

12. "It is with great regret that I *am again obliged* to announce to you the continuance of his Majesty's lamented indisposition.

13. "I cannot close this session of Parliament without expressing the satisfaction that I have derived from the zeal and assiduity with which you have applied yourselves to the several important objects which have come under your consideration.

14. "Your patient and laborious *investigation* of the state of the

*circulation* and *currency* of the kingdom demands my warmest acknowledgment; and I entertain a confident expectation that the measures *adopted*, as the result of *this inquiry*, will be productive of the most beneficial consequences."

The phrase pointed out by italics in the 12th Paragraph is *ambiguous*; and, as it is wholly superfluous, it has no business there. The 13th Paragraph (for a wonder!) is free from fault; but, in the 14th, why does the king make *two* of the "*circulation and currency*"? He means, doubtless, to speak of the thing, or things, in use as *money*. This was the *currency*; and what, then, was the "*circulation*"? It is not only useless to employ words in this way; it is a great deal worse; for it creates a confusion of ideas in the mind of the reader.

"*Investigation and inquiry*" come nearly to each other in meaning; but when the word "this," which had a direct application to what has gone before, was used, the word *investigation* ought to have followed it, and not the word *inquiry*; it being always a mark of great affectation and of false taste, when pains are taken to seek for synonymous words in order to avoid a repetition of sound. The device is *seen through*, and the littleness of mind exposed.

The *fine* word "*adopted*" is not nearly so good as the plain word *taken* would have been. The Parliament did *not adopt* the measures in question; they were their *own*; of their own invention; and, if I were here writing remarks on the measures, instead of remarks on the language in which they were spoken of, we might have a hearty laugh at the "*confident expectation*" which the king entertained of the "*most beneficial consequences*" of those measures, which were certainly the most foolish and mischievous ever taken by any Parliament, or by any legislative assembly, in the world.

"GENTLEMEN OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS:

15. "I thank you for the supplies which you have granted for the service of the present year.

16. "I sincerely regret that the necessity should have existed of making any additions to the burthens of the people; but I anticipate the most important permanent advantages from the *effort* which you have thus made *for* meeting at once all the financial difficulties of the country; and I derive *much satisfaction* from the belief that the means which you have devised for this purpose are calculated to press as lightly on *all classes* of the community as could be expected when so great an effort was to be made."

Nobody, I presume, but kings say an "effort *for* meeting." Others say that they make an effort *to* meet. And nobody, that I ever heard of before, except *bill-brokers*, talks about *meeting* money demands. One cannot help admiring the satisfaction, nay, the "*much satisfaction*" that the king derived from the belief that the new taxes would press as *lightly as possible on all classes* of the community. I do not like to call this vulgar nonsense, because, though written by the ministers, it is spoken by the king. But, *what is it?* The additional load *must fall upon somebody*; upon some *class or classes*; and where, then, was the sense of expressing "*much satisfaction*" that they would fall lightly on all classes? The words "*as possible*," which come after likely, do nothing more than make an addition to the confusion of ideas.

"MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN :

17. "I *continue* to receive from foreign powers *the strongest* assurances of their friendly disposition towards this country.

18. "I have observed with great concern the attempts which have recently been made in some of the manufacturing districts to take advantage of circumstances of local distress, to excite a spirit of disaffection to the institutions *and* government of the country. No object can be nearer my heart than to promote the *welfare* and *prosperity* of all classes of his majesty's subjects; but this cannot be effected without the maintenance of public order and tranquillity.

18. "You may rely, therefore, upon my *firm* determination to employ, for this purpose, the powers entrusted to me by law; and I have no doubt that, on your return to your several counties, you will use your utmost endeavors, in co-operating with the magis-

tracy, to defeat the machinations of those whose *projects*, if successful, could only aggravate the evils which *it professed* to remedy; and who, under the pretence of Reform, have *really no other* object *but* the subversion of our happy Constitution."

Weak minds, feeble writers and speakers, delight in *superlatives*. They have big sound in them, and give the appearance of *force*; but they very often betray those who use them into absurdities. The king, as in Paragraph No. 17, might *continue* to receive *strong* assurances; but how could he receive "*the strongest*" more than *once*?

In the 18th Paragraph we have "*welfare and prosperity*." I, for my part, shall be content with either (the two being the same thing), and if I find, from the acts of the government, reason to believe that one is really sought for, I shall care little about the other.

I am, however, I must confess, not greatly encouraged to hope for this, when I immediately afterwards hear of a "*firm determination*" to employ "*powers*," the nature of which is but too well understood. "*Determination*" can, in grammar, receive no additional force from having *firm* placed before it; but, in political interpretation, the use of this word cannot fail to be looked upon as evincing a little more of *eagerness* than one could wish to see apparent in such a case.

In these speeches, nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs generally go, like crows and ravens, in pairs. Hence we have, in the 18th Paragraph, "*the institutions and government*" of the country. Now, though there *may* be *institutions* of the country, which do not form a part of its *government*; the government is, at any rate, *amongst* the country's institutions. If every institution do not form a part of the government, the government certainly forms a part of the institutions. But as the old woman said by her goose and gander, these words have been *a couple* for so many, many years, that it would be a sin to part them just at the last.

The gross grammatical errors in the latter part of the last paragraph, where the singular pronoun *it* represents the plural noun *projects*, and the verb *profess* is in the *past* instead of the *present* time, one can account for only on the supposition that the idea of *Reform* had scared all the powers of thought from the minds of the writers. This unhappy absence of intellect seems to have continued to the end of the piece; for here we have “no other object *but*,” instead of no other object *than*; and the word “*really*” put into the mouth of *a king*, and on such an occasion, is something so *very low* that we can hardly credit our eyes when we behold it.

## INTRODUCTION

*To the Four Lessons on the productions of Lord Castlereagh, the Duke of Wellington, the Marquis Wellesley, and the Bishop of Winchester.*

From the literary productions of *Speakers* and *Ministers*, I come to those of *Ambassadors*, *Secretaries of State*, *Viceroy*s, and *Bishops*. In these persons, even more fully perhaps than in the former, we are entitled to expect proofs of great capacity, as writers. I shall give you specimens from the writings of four persons of this description, and these four, men who have been intrusted with the management of affairs as important as any that the king of this country ever had to commit to the hands of his servants: I mean *Lord Castlereagh*, the *Duke of Wellington*, the *Marquis Wellesley*, and the *Bishop of Winchester*; the first of whom has been called the *greatest statesman*, the second the *greatest captain*, the third the *greatest viceroy*, the fourth the *greatest tutor*, of the age.

The passages which I shall first select from the writings of these persons are contained in state papers relating to the *Museums at Paris*.

And here, in order that you may be better able to judge of the writings themselves, I ought to explain to you the nature of the matters to which they relate, and the circumstances under which they were written. The *Museums at Paris* contained, in the year 1815, when the King of France was escorted back to that city by the armies of the Allies, a great many *statues* and *pictures*, which Napoleon had, in his divers conquests and invasions, taken from the collections of other countries, and carried to France. When, therefore, the Allies had, by their armies, possession of Paris, at the time just mentioned, they rifled these *Museums*, and took from them what had, or what they asserted had, belonged to the Allies respectively. The French contended that this was unjust, and that it was an act of pillage. They said, that, in 1814, when the Allies were also in possession of the capital of France, they put forward no claim to the things in question, which were, to all intents and purposes, military booty, or prize; and that for the Allies to make this claim now, was not only contrary to their own precedent of 1814, but that it was to assume the character of *enemies of France*, directly in the teeth of their own repeated declarations, in which they had called themselves friends and even *Allies* of France; and in direct violation of their solemn promises to commit against the French nation no act of hostility, and to treat it, in all respects, as a friend. The Allies had now, however, the *power* in their hands; and the result was the stripping of the Museums.

To characterize this act committed by those who entered France under the name of the *Allies* of the king and of the great body of his people, and who took possession of Paris in virtue of a convention which stipulated for the security of all *public property*; to characterize such an act is unnecessary; but we cannot help lamenting that the Ministers of England were open abettors, if not original instigators, in this memorable transaction, which, of



all the transactions of that time, seems to have created the greatest portion of rancor in the minds of the people of France.

That the English Ministers were the instigators appears pretty clearly from the seizure (which was by *force of arms*) having been immediately preceded by a paper (called a note) delivered by *Lord Castlereagh* in the name of the Prince Regent to the Ambassadors of the Allies, which paper was dated 11th Sept., 1815, and from which paper I am now about to give you a specimen of the *writing* of this Secretary of State.

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### LESSON III.

*Remarks on Lord Castlereagh's Note of the 11th September, 1815, on the subject of the Museums at Paris.*

This Note sets out by saying, that representations, on the subject of the Statues and Pictures, have been laid before the Ambassadors of the Allies, and that the writer had received the commands of the Prince Regent to submit, for the consideration of the Allies, that which follows. After some further matter, amongst which we find this "greatest statesman" talking of "the *indulgencies*" (instead of *indulgences*) to which the French had a right "to *aspire*" (instead of *to hope for*); after saying that the purity of the friendship of the Allies had been "proved *beyond a question*" by their last year's conduct, and "*still more*," that is to say, *farther than beyond*, by their this year's conduct; after talking about the "*substantial integrity*" of France, and thereby meaning that she was to be *despoiled of only a part* of her dominions; after talking about "*combining*" this "*integrity* with such an *adequate* system of temporary precaution as may *satisfy* what the Allies owe to the security of their own

subjects;" after all this, and a great deal more of the same description, we come to the paragraphs that I am now going to remark on. Observe, I continue the *numbering* of the paragraphs, as if the whole of the papers on which I am commenting formed but one piece of writing.

20. "Upon what principle can France, at the close of such a war, expect to sit down with the same extent of possessions which she held before the Revolution, and desire, at the same time, to retain the ornamental spoils of all other countries? Is it that there can exist a doubt of the issue of the contest, or of the power of the Allies to effectuate what justice and policy require? If not, upon what principle deprive France of her late territorial acquisitions, and preserve to her the *spoliations appertaining to those territories which* all modern conquerors have invariably *respected*, as inseparable from the country to which they belonged?

21. "The Allied Sovereigns have perhaps something to atone for to Europe, in consequence of the course pursued by them, when at Paris, during the last year. It is true, they never did so far make themselves parties in the *criminality* of this *mass of plunder* as to sanction *it* by any stipulation in their treaties; such a *recognition* has been on their part uniformly refused: but they certainly did use their influence to repress at that moment any agitation of their claims, in the hope that France, not less subdued by their generosity than by their arms, might be disposed to preserve inviolate a peace which had been studiously framed to serve as a bond of reconciliation between the nation and the king. They had also reason to expect that his Majesty would be advised voluntarily to restore a considerable *proportion*, at least, of these spoils, to their lawful owners.

22. "But the question is a very different one now, and to pursue the same course, under circumstances so essentially altered, would be, in the judgment of the Prince Regent, *equally unwise towards France, and unjust towards our Allies*, who have a direct interest in this question.

23. "His Royal Highness, in stating this opinion, feels it necessary to guard against the possibility of misrepresentation.

24. "Whilst he deems it to be the duty of the Allied Sovereigns not only not to obstruct, but facilitate, upon the present occasion, the *return of these objects* to the places *from whence* they were torn, it seems not less consistent with *their delicacy* not to suffer the *position* of their armies in France, or the *removal* of these works

from the Louvre, to become the means, either directly or indirectly, of bringing within *their* own dominions *a single article* which did not of right, at the period of *their conquest*, belong either to their respective family collections, or to the countries over which they now actually reign.

25. "Whatever value the Prince Regent might attach to such exquisite specimens of the fine arts, if otherwise acquired, he has *no wish to become possessed* of them at the expense of France, or rather of the countries to which they of a right belong, *more especially by following up a principle in war* which he considers as a reproach to the nation by which it has been adopted, and so far from wishing to *take advantage* of the occasion to *purchase* from the rightful owners *any articles* they might, from pecuniary considerations, be disposed to *part with*, his Royal Highness would, on the contrary, be disposed rather to afford the means of replacing them in those very temples and galleries of which they were so long the ornaments.

26. "Were it possible that his Royal Highness's sentiments towards the person and cause of Louis XVIII. could be brought into doubt, or that the *position* of his Most Christian Majesty *was* likely to be *injured* in the *eyes* of his own people, the Prince Regent would not come to this conclusion without the most painful reluctance; but, *on the contrary*, his Royal Highness believes that his Majesty will rise in the love and respect of his own subjects, in proportion as he *separates* himself from *these remembrances* of revolutionary warfare. These spoils, which impede a moral reconciliation between France and the countries she has invaded, are not necessary to record the exploits of her armies, which, notwithstanding the cause in which they were achieved, must ever make the arms of the nation respected abroad. But whilst these *objects* remain at Paris, constituting as it were the *title-deeds* of the countries which have been given up, the *sentiments of reuniting* these countries again to France will never be altogether extinct; nor will the *genius* of the French *people* ever completely *associate itself* with the more *limited existence* assigned to the *nation* under the Bourbons."

I shall say nothing of the *logic* of this passage; and I would fain pass over the real and poorly-disguised *motive* of the proceeding; but this must strike every observer.

It is the mere *writing*, which, at present, is to be the

principal object of our attention. To be sure, the sentiments, the very thoughts, in Paragraphs 24 and 25, which speak the soul, as they are conveyed in the language, of the sedentary and circumspect keeper of a huckster's stand, or the more sturdy perambulating bearer of a miscellaneous pack, do, with voice almost imperious, demand a portion of our notice; while, with equal force, a similar claim is urged by the *suspensions* in the former of these paragraphs, and the *protestations* in the latter, which present to the nations of Europe, and especially to the French nation, such a captivating picture of English *frankness and sincerity!*

But let us come to the *writing*; and here, in Paragraph 20, we have *spoliations* appertaining to territories, though *spoliation* means the *act of despoiling*, and never does or can mean the thing of which one has been despoiled; and next, we have the word *which*, relating to *spoliation*, and then the subsequent part of the sentence tells us that *spoliations* have invariably been *respected*.

In the 21st Paragraph, does the *it* relate to criminality or to mass of plunder? and what is meant by a *sanction* given to either? Could the writer suppose it possible that it was necessary to tell the Allies, themselves, that they had *not sanctioned* such things? And here, if we may, for a moment, speak of the *logic* of our "greatest statesman," the Allies *did sanction*, not *criminality*, not a *mass of plunder*, but the *quiet possession* of the specimens of art, by leaving, in 1814, that possession as they found it. At the close of this paragraph, we have a *proportion*, instead of a *part*, an error common enough with country fellows when they begin to *talk fine*, but one that surely ought to be absent from the most stately of the productions of a Secretary of State.

"Unwise *towards* France, and unjust towards the Allies," and "*equally*" too, is as pretty a specimen of what is called *twattle* as you will find; while "*the return*"

of these "*objects*," the not purloining of a "*single article*," the not wishing to "*take advantage*" and to "*purchase* any of the *articles* that the owners might wish to *part with*," form as fine an instance of the powers of the *plume de crasse*, or *pen of mud*, as you will be able to hunt out of the history of a whole year's proceedings at the Police Offices.

But, in Paragraph 24, we have "*their conquest*." The conquest of *whom* or *what*? That of *the Allies*, that of *their dominions*, or that of the "*objects*"? It is impossible to answer, except by guess; but it comes out, at any rate, that there was a *conquest*; and this "greatest statesman" might have perceived that this *one word* was a complete answer to all his assertions about plunder and spoliation; for that which is *conquered* is held *of right*; and the only want of right in the Allies, forcibly to take these "*articles*," arose from their having entered France as *Allies of the King of France*, and not as enemies and conquerers.

And what, in Paragraph 25, is meant by "*following up a principle in war*"? The phrase, "follow up a principle," is low as the dirt; it is chit-chat, and very unfit to be used in a writing of this sort. But, as to the sense; how could the regent, even if he had purchased the pictures, be said to *follow up* a principle "*in war*"? The meaning, doubtless, was that the regent had no wish to become possessed of these things at the expense of France, or, rather, at the expense of the countries to which they belonged, especially as he could not thus gratify his taste for the arts without acting upon a principle which *the French had acted on in war*. This meaning might, indeed, be supposed to be contained in the above phrase of Lord Castlereagh; but in a writing of this kind, ought anything be left to *supposition*?

The 26th Paragraph is an assemblage of all that is

incorrect, low, and ludicrous. The "*was*" after Christian Majesty ought to be *could be*, that is, "*were* it possible that his position *could be* likely to be injured;" and not "*were* it possible that his position *was* likely to be injured," which is downright nonsense. And then only think of an *injured position*; and of the king's *position* being injured "*in the eyes*" of his people! "But, *on the contrary*." On the contrary of *what*? Look back, and see if it be possible to answer this question. Next comes the intolerable fustian of the king's "*separating himself from remembrances*;" and from this flight, down the "greatest statesman" pitches, robs the attorney's office, and calls the statues and pictures "*title deeds*, as it were;" and this "*as it were*" is, perhaps, the choicest phrase of the whole passage. But, in conclusion (for it is time to have done with it), what do you say to "*the sentiments of re-uniting the countries to France*"? And what do you say, then, to the "*genius*" (that is, the *disposition*) "*of the French people associating itself with the limited existence assigned to the nation under the Bourbons*"? What do you say of the man who could make use of these words, when his meaning was, "that, as long as these statues and pictures remained to remind the French people of the late extent of the dominions of France, their minds would not be completely reconciled to those more narrow limits, which had now been prescribed to her"? What do you say of the man who, having this plain proposition to state, could talk of the *genius* of the *people* associating itself with the more limited *existence* of the *nation*, the *nation* being *the people*; and therefore his meaning, if there can be any sense in the words, being, that the people as a nation had, under the Bourbons, had their *existence*, or length of life, abridged? What do you say, what can you say of such a man, but that nature might have made him for a valet, for a strolling player, and possibly for an auctioneer; but

never for a Secretary of State! Yet this man was *educated at the University of Cambridge.\**

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#### LESSON IV.

*Remarks on a Dispatch of the Duke of Wellington (called the greatest Captain of the age) relative to the Museums at Paris.*

Having, as far as relates to the *Museums*, taken a sufficient view of the writing of the *greatest Statesman* of the age, I now come to that of the "*greatest Captain*." The writing that I am now about to notice relates to the same subject. The Captain was one of the *Commanders* at Paris, at the time above spoken of, and it is in that capacity that he writes. But we ought to observe, here, that he is not only a great Captain, but a great *Ambassador* also; and that he was Ambassador at the Congress of Vienna just before the time we are speaking of; and that he was formerly *Secretary of State* for Ireland.

The paper, from which I am about to make a quotation, is a "*dispatch*" from the "*greatest Captain*" to *Lord Castlereagh*, dated at Paris, 23rd September, 1815, soon after the museums had been rifled.

I shall not take up much of your time with the performance of this gentleman; a short specimen will suffice;

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\* This LESSON was written in June, 1822. On the 12th of August, 1822, this same Lord Castlereagh (being still Secretary of State) killed himself at North Cray, in Kent, by cutting his throat. A Coroner's Jury pronounced him to have been *insane*; and, which is very curious, a letter from the *Duke of Wellington* was produced to prove that the deceased *had been insane for some time*. Though, mind, he had been for some time, and *was when he cut his throat*, actually entrusted with the care and powers of the two other Secretaries' offices (they being absent), as well as those of the office of Foreign Affairs!

and that shall consist of the first three paragraphs of his "*dispatch*."

"MY DEAR LORD :

27. "There has been *a good deal of discussion* here lately respecting the measures which I have been under the necessity of adopting, in order *to get for* the King of the Netherlands his pictures, etc., from the museums; and lest *these reports* should reach the Prince Regent, I *wish to trouble you*, for his Royal Highness's *information*, with the following statement of what has passed.

28. "Shortly after the arrival of the sovereigns at Paris, the minister of the King of the Netherlands *claimed* the pictures, etc., belonging to his sovereign, *equally* with those of *other powers*; *and*, as far as I could learn, *never could get* any satisfactory *reply* from the French government. After several conversations with me, he *addressed* your lordship an *official* note, which was laid before the ministers of the allied sovereigns, assembled in conference; *and* the subject was taken into consideration repeatedly, with a view to discover a mode of doing justice to the claimants of the specimens of the arts in the museums, without injuring the feelings of the King of France. In the meantime the Prussians had obtained from his majesty not only all the really Prussian pictures, but those belonging to the Prussian territories on the left of the Rhine, and the pictures, etc., belonging to all the allies of his Prussian majesty; *and* the subject pressed for an early decision; *and* your lordship wrote *your* note of the 11th instant, in which it was fully discussed.

29. "The ministers of the King of the Netherlands still having no satisfactory *answer* from the French government, appealed to me, as the general-in-chief of the army of the King of the Netherlands, to know *whether I had any objection* to employ his majesty's troops to obtain possession of what was his *undoubted property*. I referred this application again to the ministers of the allied courts, and *no objection having been stated*, I considered it *my duty* to take the necessary measures to obtain *what was his right*."

The great characteristic of this writing (if writing it ought to be called) is the thorough-paced *vulgarity* of it. There is a meanness of manner as well as of expression, and, indeed, a suitableness to the subject much too natural in all its appearances, to have been the effect of art.



The writer, though addressing a minister of state, and writing matter to be laid before a sovereign, begins exactly in the manner of a quidnunc talking to another that he has just met in the street. "There has been a *good deal of discussion*," (that is to say, *talk*) "*here*," that is to say, at Paris, Castlereagh being, at the time, in London. The phrase "*to get for*" is so very dignified that it could have come only from a great man, and could have been inspired by nothing short of the consciousness of being "*the ally of all the nations of Europe*," as the writer calls himself in another part of this famous "*dispatch*."

But *what* are "*these reports*," of which the great Captain speaks in the latter part of this paragraph? He had spoken of no *reports* before. He had mentioned "*discussion*," and a "*good deal*" of it; but had said not a word about *reports*; and *these* reports pop out upon us like "*these six men in buckram*," in Falstaff's narrative to the Prince.

The captain's "*wishing to trouble*" Lord Castlereagh, "*for the regent's information*," closes this paragraph in a very suitable manner, and prepares the mind for the next, where the regent would find *trouble* enough, if he were compelled to find out the English of it. The Dutch minister "*claimed* the pictures belonging to his sovereign, *equally* with those of *other powers*." What! did this Dutchman claim *the whole*: those belonging to the Dutch sovereign and those belonging to all the other powers besides? This, to be sure, would have been in the true Dutch style; but this could hardly be the fact. If it were, no wonder that the duke had learned that the minister "*never could get any satisfactory reply*;" for it must have been a deal indeed that would have satisfied him.

The phrase "*he addressed your lordship* an official note" is in the *counting-house* style; and then to say to Lord Castlereagh, "*your lordship wrote your note* of the

11th of September," was so necessary, lest the latter should imagine that *somebody else* had written the note! Nor are the four *ands* in this paragraph to be overlooked; for never was this poor conjunction so worked before, except, perhaps, in some narrative of a little girl to her mother.

The narrative is, in the last-quoted paragraph, continued with unrelaxed spirit. The Dutch minister can still obtain no satisfactory answer; he asks the duke whether he has *any objection* to use force, and asserts, at the same time, that the *goods* in question are his master's "*undoubted property*." Upon this the duke applies to the other ministers, and, "*no objection having been stated*," he considers it *his duty* to obtain "*what was his right*;" that is to say, the Dutch king's right.

Never was there surely a parcel of words before put together by anybody in so clumsy a manner. In a subsequent part of the "*dispatch*," we have this: "I added, that I had no instructions regarding the museum, *nor no* grounds on which to form a judgment." In another place we have "the King of the *Netherland's* pictures." In another place we have "that the *property* should be returned to *their* rightful owners."

But, to bestow criticism on such a shocking abuse of letters is to disgrace it; and nothing can apologize for what I have done but the existence of a general knowledge of the fact that the miserable stuff that I have quoted, and on which I have been remarking, proceeded from the pen of a man who has, on many occasions, had some of the most important of the nation's affairs committed to his management. There is in the nonsense of Castlereagh a frivolity and a foppery that give it a sort of liveliness, and that now and then elicit a smile; but in the productions of his correspondent there is nothing to relieve; all is vulgar, all clumsy, all dull, all torpid inanity.

## LESSON V.

*Remarks on a Note presented by Lord Castlereagh to the Ambassadors of the Allies, at Paris, in July, 1815, relative to the slave trade.*

30. "VISCOUNT CASTLEREAGH, his Britannic Majesty's principal Secretary of State, etc., in reference to the communication he has made to the conference of the orders addressed to the admiralty to suspend all hostilities against the coast of France, observes, that there is *reason to foresee* that French ship-owners *might* be induced to renew the slave trade, under the supposition of the *peremptory* and *total* abolition decreed by Napoleon Bonaparte having *ceased* with his power; that, *nevertheless*, great and powerful *considerations*, arising from *motives* of humanity and even regard for the king's authority, require that no time should be lost *to maintain in France* the entire and *immediate abolition* of the traffic in slaves; that if, at the time of the Treaty of Paris, the king's administration *could wish* a final but gradual stop *should be put* to this trade, in the space of five years, for the purpose of affording the king the gratification *of having* consulted, as much as possible, the interests of the French proprietors in the colonies, now, that the absolute *prohibition* has been ordained, the question *assumes entirely* a different shape, *for* if the king were to revoke the said prohibition, he would *give himself the disadvantage of authorizing*, in the interior of France, *the reproach* which more than once has been thrown out against his former government, of countenancing reactions, and, at the same time, *justifying, out of France*, and particularly in England, the belief of a systematic *opposition to liberal ideas*; that *accordingly* the time *seems to have arrived* when the Allies cannot hesitate formally to *give weight in France* to the immediate and entire *prohibition* of the slave trade, a prohibition, the necessity of which has been acknowledged, in principle, in the transactions of the Congress at Vienna."

Now, I put this question to you: *Do you understand what this great statesman means?* Read the note three times over, and then say whether you *understand what he wants*. You may *guess*; but you can go little further. Here is a whole mass of grammatical errors; but it is the

obscurity, the unintelligibleness of the note, that I think constitutes its greatest fault. One way of proving the badness of this writing is to express the meaning of the writer in a clear manner; thus:

“Lord Castlereagh observes that there is reason to apprehend that the French ship-owners may be induced to renew the slave trade, from a supposition that the total abolition, recently decreed by Napoleon, has been nullified by the cessation of his authority; that motives of humanity, as well as a desire to promote the establishment of the king's authority, suggest that no time should be lost in taking efficient measures to maintain the decree of abolition; that at the time of the Treaty of Paris, the king's ministers wished to abolish this trade, but, in order that the king might, as much as possible, consult the interests of the colonial proprietors, those ministers wished the object to be accomplished by degrees during the space of five years; that now, however, when the abolition has been actually decreed, the matter assumes an entirely different shape, seeing that it is not now an abolition, but the refraining from revoking an abolition, that is proposed to be suggested to the king; that, if the king were to do this, he would warrant amongst his own people the injurious imputation, more than once brought against his former government, of countenancing the work of undoing and overturning, and would, at the same time, confirm foreign nations, and particularly the English, in the belief that he had adopted a systematic opposition to liberal principles and views; that, therefore, the interests of the king not less than those of humanity seem to call upon the Allies to give, formally and without delay, the weight of their influence in favor, as far as relates to France, of an entire and immediate abolition of the slave trade, an abolition, the necessity of which has, in principle at least, been acknowledged in the transactions of the Congress of Vienna.”

Now, as to the several faulty expressions in the note of Castlereagh, though I have made great use of *italics*, I have not pointed out one-half of the faults. Whoever before heard of a *reason* to *foresee* a thing? He meant reason to *believe* that the thing would take place, and as it was a thing to be wished not to take place, to *apprehend* was the word; because to apprehend means to think of with some degree of fear. Wishing to-morrow to be a fine day, what would you think of me if I were to say that I had *reason* to *foresee* that it would rain? The *might* is clearly wrong. If the abolition were *total*, what had *peremptory* to do there? Could it be *more* than *total*? The *nevertheless* had no business there. He was about to give reasons why the abolition decree ought to be confirmed; but he had stated no reasons given by anybody why it *should not*. To lose no time *to maintain*; and then the *in France*, and then the *immediate*; altogether there is such a mass of confusion that one cannot describe it. "To maintain *in France*," would lead one to suppose that there was, or had been, a *slave trade in France*. The next part, beginning with "*that if*," sets all criticism at defiance. Look at the verbs *could wish*, and *should be*! Look at *of having*. Then comes *prohibition* for *abolition*, two very different things. To *assume entirely* a different shape is very different from to assume *an entirely different* shape. The latter is meant and the former is said. Then what does the *for* do there? What *consequence* is he coming to? How was he going to show that the *shape* was different? He attempts to show no such thing; but falls to work to foretell the evils which will fall on the King of France if he revoke Napoleon's decree. And here, Goddess of Grub-street, do hear him talking of the King of France *giving himself the disadvantage of authorizing reproaches*! If the king's conduct would *justify* people in believing ill of him, why should it justify the English *in particular*?

They might, indeed, be *more ready* to believe ill of him; but it could not be *more just* in them than in others. An *opposition to ideas* is a pretty *idea* enough; and so is the *giving of weight in France* to an immediate prohibition!

Never was there, surely, such a piece of writing seen before! Fifty years hence, no man who should read it would be able to ascertain its meaning. I am able to pick it out, because, and only because, I am acquainted with the history of the matter treated of. And yet, most momentous transactions, transactions involving the fate of millions of human beings, have been committed to the hands of this man!

It is not unnecessary for me to observe that, though I have stated the meaning of this note in a way for it to be understood, I by no means think, that even in the words in which I have expressed it, it was a proper note for the occasion. It was false in professions; and it was, as towards the King of France, insolent in a high degree. Even if it had been just to compel the king to abolish the slave trade, the matter might have been expressed in a less offensive manner; and, at any rate, he might have been spared the brutal taunt that we meet with towards the close of this matchless specimen of diplomatic stupidity.

Hoping that this book will outlive the recollection of the transactions treated of by the papers on which I have been remarking, it seems no more than justice to the parties to say that the abolition, which was thus extorted, had effect but for a very short time; and the French nation never acknowledged it as binding; that at this moment (June, 1822), complaints are made in the House of Commons of the breach of agreement on the part of the French; that the French have revived and do carry on the traffic in African slaves; that our ministers promise to make remonstrance; but that they dare not talk of

war; and that without declaring their readiness for war, their remonstrances can have no effect.

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## LESSON VI.

*Remarks on passages in Dispatches from the MARQUIS WELLESLEY, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, to Viscount Sidmouth, and to Mr. Peel, Secretaries of State; dated Dublin Castle, from 3d January to 12th June, 1822; and also on the charge of the BISHOP OF WINCHESTER, delivered in July, 1822.*

31. "Concluding that your lordship *had been* apprised, before my arrival in Dublin, of every important circumstance respecting the unhappy disturbances *which have* prevailed in this country, I proceed to *submit to you*, for his *Majesty's consideration*, such information as I have received on that subject during the few days that I have passed since my *succession* to this government.

32. "I propose to *arrange* this information *with reference* to each county *respectively*, for the purpose of facilitating a *comparison with* such statements as may already be in your lordship's possession, *and* of enabling you to form a judgment of the *relative* state of each particular district *at the different periods of time* specified in each document."

The marquis's style is not, in general, *low* and *clumsy*; it has the opposite faults, *affectation* and *foppishness*; and where the meaning of the writer is obscure, it is not so much because he has not a clear head as because he cannot condescend to talk in the language and manner of common mortals.

"*Had been* apprised *before* of disturbances *which have* prevailed" presents great confusion as to times. We can hardly come at the precise meaning. It should have been: "Concluding that, before my arrival, your lordship *was* apprised of every important circumstance respecting the unhappy disturbances *prevailing* in this country." For the prevalence was *still in existence*. To *submit* is

to place at the *disposal of*, to *put under the power of*; and, therefore, *transmit*, or *send*, was the proper word; for it is *the king* to whom the information is *submitted*. The marquis *sent* the information to Lord Sidmouth that he might *submit* it to the king.

"*Succession to this government*" is a strangely pompous phrase at best. But it is not correct; for his *succession* (if it were one) took place at his *appointment*; and he is about to speak of what he has learned since his *arrival* in Dublin; and why not say *arrival*?

The 32d paragraph is, perhaps, as complete a specimen of smoothness in words and of obscurity in meaning as ever found its way upon paper; and yet this was an occasion for being particularly clear, seeing that the marquis was here *explaining the plan* of his dispatch. *With reference to*, means *in relation to*, as *appertaining to*, *having a view towards*. The first is the best for the marquis: and that is little short of nonsense; for what is *arranging* information *in relation to* each county? What does it mean? Not what the marquis thought he was saying, which was that he proposed to speak of the state of all the counties, and that the *information relating to each county he meant to place under a separate head*. This was what he meant; but this he does not say.

And then again, what does *respectively* do here after *each*? *Respectively* means *particularly* or *relatively*; and as he had before said, or meant to say, that he proposed to place the information relating to each *county* under the head of that county, what need was there of the addition of this long and noisy adverb?

To be sure, to place the information under separate heads, each head confining itself to the information relating to one county, was a very good way of facilitating a comparison of *this information* with that which was already in Lord Sidmouth's possession; but it was not enough to say "*facilitating a comparison with such*



*statements;*” and there appears, besides, to be no reason to conclude that the information before possessed was arranged according to counties; on the contrary, the marquis’s laying down of his *plan* would induce us to suppose that the arrangement of his matter was new.

The latter part of the sentence is all confusion. The marquis means that, by placing his information as before described, he shall enable Lord Sidmouth to form a judgment of the state of each district, *now*, compared with the state in which it was at the date of the *former information*. The “*relative state of each particular district*” may mean its state at *one period compared with its state at another period*; but “*at different periods of time*” by no means gives us this idea. And, even if it did, what are we to do with the “*each document*” at the close? *Each* means *one of two, one of more than one*. So that here we have the *relative state* of a district at the *different periods of time* specified in *one document*; and the main point that the marquis was driving at was to show Lord Sidmouth the manner in which he was going to enable him to compare the contents of the present document with those of the documents already held in his possession.

I have taken here the first two sentences of the dispatch. They are a fair specimen of the marquis’s style, the great characteristic of which is *obscurity* arising from *affectation*. What he meant was this: “I propose to place the information relating to each county under a distinct head, for the purpose of facilitating a comparison of this information with that which your lordship may already possess, and also for the purpose of enabling you to form a judgment of the present state of each county, compared with the state in which it was at the date of former dispatches.” And would it not have been better to write thus than to put upon paper a parcel of words,

the meaning of which, even if you read them a hundred times over, must still remain a matter of uncertainty?

But there is another fault here; and that is, all the latter part of the sentence is a mere *redundancy*; for of what was Lord Sidmouth to “form a *judgment*?” A judgment of the *comparative state* of the country at the two periods? What could this be *more than the making of the comparison*? *Judgment*, in this case, means *opinion*; and if the marquis had said that his object was to enable Lord Sidmouth to form a judgment as to *what ought to be done*, for instance, in consequence of the change in the state of the country, there would have been some sense in it; but to enable him to *see the change* was all that the marquis was talking about; and the very act of making the comparison was to *discern*, or *judge of*, the change.

It is not my intention to swell out these remarks, or, with this dispatch before me, I could go on to a great extent indeed. Some few passages I cannot, however, refrain from just pointing out to you.

33. “The commanding officer at Bantry *reports a daring attack* made a few nights previously, on several very respectable houses in the immediate vicinity of that town, by a numerous banditti, who succeeded in obtaining arms from many; and the officer stationed at Skibbereen *states his opinion* that the spirit of disaffection, which *had been* confined to the northern baronies of the county, *had spread* in an alarming measure *through* the whole of West Carbury; that nightly meetings *are* held at various places on the coast, and that bands of offenders *assemble*, consisting of not less than three hundred in each band.

34. “It further appears, from various communications, that the greater part of the population of the northern part of the county of Cork *had* assembled in the mountains, and that *they* have in some places made demonstrations of attack, and in others *have* committed outrages by day, with increased force and boldness.”

“*Reports an attack*” is of the *slang military*, and should not have forced its way into this dispatch. “*States his opinion that*,” is little better. But it is to the strange

confusion in the *times of the verbs* that I here wish to direct your attention. This is a fault the marquis very frequently commits.

I cannot help drawing your attention to "*a numerous handitti*" and "*not less than three hundred men.*" *Banditti* is plural, and therefore the *a* ought to be left out. *Less* is the comparative of *little*, used with reference to quantity; but *men* are not a quantity, but a number, and the comparative of *few*, which is *fewer*, ought to have been used here.

35. "The magistrates resident at Dunmanaway report *that* illegal oaths *have for a long time been* administered in that neighborhood; *that* nocturnal meetings have frequently been held; *that* in the adjoining parishes, notices of an inflammatory description have been posted; *and in one* parish, arms have been taken from the peaceable inhabitants.

36. "The *Rector of* — reports, on the 10th, that six houses of his parishioners had been attacked on the preceding night, and some arms obtained from them, *and then* an attempt had been made to *assassinate* Captain Bernard, an active yeomanry officer, when only a short distance behind his corps, but that, owing to the pistol presented at him missing fire, he escaped, and his brother shot the assailant."

We do not know from the words "*have for a long time been* administered," whether the oaths were administered *a long time ago*, or are now, and long have been *administering*. The *that* should have been repeated between the *and* and the *in* towards the close of paragraph 35; for the want of it takes the last fact *out of the report* of the magistrates, and makes it an assertion of the marquis. The same remark applies to the 36th paragraph, where, for the want of the *that* between the *and* and the *then*, it is the marquis, and not the rector, who asserts the fact of an attempt to *assassinate* the captain. An odd sort of an attempt to *assassinate*, by-the-bye, seeing that it was made by a *pistol openly presented at him*, and that, too, when his troop was just on before, and when his brother was so near at hand as to be able to *shoot the assailant*! But *assassinate* is become a fashionable word in such cases.

37. "On the evening of the same day a detachment of the 11th Regiment was attacked, on its march from Macroom to Bandon, by a party of sixty men, who followed *it* for three miles, and took advantage of the inclosures to fire, and to retard the march of the *king's troops*."

The meaning is that the party of sixty men followed *it* (the regiment), took advantage of the inclosures to fire on *it*, and to retard *its* march; but the marquis, from a desire to write *fine*, leaves us in *doubt* whether the *regiment* and the *king's troops* be the *same* body of men; and this doubt is, indeed, countenanced by the almost incredible circumstance that a *regular regiment* should be *followed* for three miles, and actually have its march retarded by *sixty men*!

38. "A countryman's house is also stated to have been attacked by forty men, well mounted and armed, who severely beat and wounded him, and took his horse. — *reports an attack* on the house of Mr. Sweet, near Macroom, who, having received previous intimation of the attack, and having prepared for defence, succeeded in repulsing the assailants, about two hundred in number, with a *loss of two killed*, who were *carried off by their associates*, although their horses were secured."

Here we have *reports an attack* again; but your attention is called to the latter part of the paragraph, where it would appear that *Mr. Sweet* sustained a *loss of two killed*; and yet these two dead men were *carried off by their assailants*. If the marquis had stopped at the word *killed*, it would have been impossible not to understand him to mean that Mr. Sweet had two of his men killed.

39. "A magistrate communicates that information had been received by him of several intended attacks upon houses in that neighborhood, but that they had been prevented by *the* judicious *employment of the police*, stationed at Sallans, under the Peace Preservation Act."

By *employing the police in a judicious manner*, the marquis means; but says quite another thing.

40 "The police magistrate at Westmeath reports *the setting fire*

to a farmer's outhouses, which, together with *the* cattle in them, WAS consumed."

It should be "the setting *of* fire;" and it should be *were*, and not *was*; for the deuce is in it if *out-houses*, together with the cattle in *them*, do not make up a *plural*.

41. "The *result of the facts* stated in this dispatch, *and its* inclosures, seems to *justify an opinion* that, although no material change has occurred in any other part of Ireland, the disturbances in the vicinity of Macroom *have assumed a more decided aspect of general disorder*, and accordingly I have resorted to additional measures of precaution and military operation."

There should be an *in* between the *and* and the *its*. But, it is not the *result of the facts* that seems to justify the opinion; it is the *facts themselves* that justify the opinion, and the *opinion is the result*. *Measures of military operation*, too, is an odd sort of phrase. This paragraph is all bad, from beginning to end; but I am merely pointing out prominent and gross errors.

42. "Another magistrate reports several *robberies of arms* in the parishes of Skull and Kilmore, and the burning of a corn-store at Crookhaven; and another, in representing the alarming state of the country, adds, that the *object* of the insurgents, in one district at least, has not been *confined* to the lowering *of rents and tithes*, but *extended* to the *refusal also* of the *priest's dues*."

To *rob* applies to the person or thing *from* whom or which something is violently and unlawfully taken. Men rob a man *of* his money, or a house *of* its goods; but it is not the *money and goods* that are *robbed*. Yet this is a very common phrase with the marquis, who, in other places, talks of "*plundering arms from* people," and who, by saying "*six hundred and seventy-six firearms*," and the like, leaves us clearly to understand that *he* is at liberty to use this noun in the *singular*, and, of course, to say *a fire-arm* whenever he may choose; a liberty, however, which I would, my dear James, earnestly recommend to you never to think of taking.

To *confine* and *extend* an *object* does not seem to be very clear sense; and, at any rate, to say that the object of *lowering* rents and tithes has been extended to the *refusal also* of the priest's dues makes sad work indeed. Without the *also*, the thing might pass; but that word makes this part of the sentence downright nonsense.

43. "No additional military force, no improvement nor augmentation of the police, would now be effectual without the aid of the Insurrection Act; with that aid it appears to be rational to expect that tranquillity may be maintained, confirmed, and extended throughout Ireland. It is, therefore, my duty, in every view, to request the renewal of the law, *of which the operation forms the subject of this dispatch.*"

Did any man, in any writing of any sort, ever before meet with anything like this? Suppose I were to say, "*the writings of which the inaccuracies* form the subject of these remarks," what would the world think and say of me? This is indeed "*prose run mad.*"

Cobbett means, of course, that we should say, "the writings, the inaccuracies of which"; but we can now say, "the writings whose inaccuracies," which sounds much more smooth and elegant.

44. "With respect to Westmeath, the chief magistrate of police has *stated* the *revival* of those *party feuds* and *personal conflicts* in the neighborhood of Mullingar, which are considered in this country to be indications of *the* return of public tranquillity, and from which the magistrate expects *the detection of past offences* against the state."

One loses sight of everything about language here, in contemplating the shocking, the horrible fact! For, what is so horrible as the fact here officially stated, that *party feuds* and *personal conflicts* are deemed indications *favorable to the government*, and that they are expected by the magistrate to lead to *the detection of past offences* against the state! As to the grammar: to "*state the revival*" is just as good English as it would be to say that the magistrate has *stated the fine weather*. The "*the return*" ought to be "*a return.*"

45. "The early expiration of the Act would, at least, *hazard the revival* of that tyranny; the restraints imposed on violence have not yet been of sufficient duration to form any solid foundation of a better and more disciplined disposition in the minds of the people. Even now it is believed that arms are retained in *the hope of the expiration* of the law on the 1st of August; and although a more auspicious sentiment may exist in the hearts of some, even of the guilty, it would be contrary to all *prudent policy and provident wisdom*, by a premature relaxation of the law, to afford facility to the accomplishment of the worst designs, and to weaken the protections and safeguards, which now secure the lives and properties of the loyal and obedient, before the spirit of outrage had been effectually extinguished."

"To *hazard the revival* " is not correct. To *hazard* is to *expose to danger*; and certainly the marquis did not mean that the *revival of the tyranny* was a thing that ought not to be *put in danger*. The word *hazard* had no business there. Another mode of expression ought to have been used; such as, "exposed the *country* to the danger of the revival of the tyranny."

The *semicolon* after tyranny ought to have been a *full-point*. "In the hope of *the expiration*" is bad enough; but it is the *arrangement* of this sentence, the *placing of the several parts of it*, which is most worthy of your attention, and which ought to be a warning to every one who takes pen in hand.

"*Prudent policy and provident wisdom* " would seem to say that there are such things as *imprudent policy* and *improvident wisdom*; but, still, all the rest is inferior, in point of importance, to the *confusion* which follows, and which leaves you wholly in doubt as to the meaning of the writer. Now, observe with what facility this mass of confusion is reduced to order, and that, too, without adding to or taking from the marquis one single word. I begin after the word *wisdom*: "to afford, by a premature relaxation of the law, facility to the accomplishment of the worst designs, and to weaken, before the spirit of outrage had been effectually extinguished, the safeguards

which now secure the lives and properties of the loyal and obedient."

How clear this is! And how much more harmonious and more elegant, too, than the sentence of the marquis; and yet the words are all the same identical words! Towards the close of Letter XXI, I gave you, from Dr. JOHNSON and Dr. WATTS, some striking instances of the *wrong placing* of words in sentences; and, lest these should be insufficient to keep so great a man as the marquis in countenance, I will here show that *a bishop* can commit errors of the same sort and greater in degree.

Before passing to the bishop, is it not worth while to pause a moment to notice the remarkable fact, that, in the matter of outrages and violence, the Irish seem to have been just as bad at the beginning of the century as they are now toward the end of it? What a familiar picture of outrage and violence these dispatches present, and what a time the English have had in governing the people of this "ever faithful" isle! The government has certainly improved since the time these dispatches were written; and yet what shall we say of the advance made by the people? Are all these murders and assassinations of the present day the result of English tyranny and injustice, or are they the result of other causes? What have the Church, the press, and the schools done to improve the character of the Irish people? I fear that if these were weighed in the balance, they would all be found wanting. The French under the Napoleons and the Germans under Bismarck have suffered ten times more oppression than the Irish under Victoria, without committing one tenth as many crimes; and the reason of this is, that the French and the Germans are *better educated* than the Irish. They have the moral sense to perceive that the commission of crime no more leads to national liberty than to personal happiness. Not the least important part of that education in which the Irish are lacking, is the practice of *economy* and *foresight* in the affairs of daily life. Out of every hundred Frenchmen, at least ninety-five save something every year; and the proportion of saving people among the Germans is perhaps still greater. Now I am positive that, among the Irish, not ten in a hundred ever think of saving anything; and this is one cause of the misery and starvation that periodically overtakes them.

I have before me "*A Charge delivered to the Clergy of*



*the Diocese of Winchester, at a primary visitation of that diocese, by GEORGE TOMLINE, D.D., F.R.S., Lord Bishop of Winchester, Prelate of the most Noble Order of the Garter."* We will not stop here to inquire what a *prelate's* office may require of him relative to an *Order* which history tells us arose out of a *favorite lady* dropping *her garter* at a dance; but I must observe that, as the titles here stand, it would appear that the *last* is deemed the *most honorable* and of *most importance to the clergy!* This bishop, whose name *was* PRETTYMAN, was the *tutor* of that William Pitt who was called the *heaven-born* minister, and a history of whose life has been written by this bishop. So that we have here, a *Doctor of Divinity*, a *Fellow of the Royal Society*, a *Prelate of the most Noble Order of the Garter*, and a *Bishop of one of the richest Sees in the whole world*, who, besides, is an *Historian*, and was *Tutor to a heaven-born minister*. Let us see then what sort of *writing* comes from such a source. I could take an incorrect sentence, I could even take a specimen of downright nonsense, from almost any page of the *Charge*. But I shall content myself with the *very first sentence of it*.

46. "My reverend brethren, being called to preside over this distinguished diocese, at a late period of life, I have thought it incumbent upon me not to delay the opportunity of becoming personally acquainted with my clergy longer than circumstances rendered absolutely necessary."

There are *two* double meanings in this short sentence. Was he called at some former time, to preside over the diocese *when he should become old?* or was he, *when he had become old*, called to preside over the diocese? But what follows is still worse. Does he mean that he thought it incumbent on him to become acquainted with his clergy *as soon as possible*, or *in as short a time as possible?* To *delay an opportunity* is not very good; and that which is of a man's own appointment, and which proceeds purely

from his own will, cannot strictly be called an *opportunity*. But it is the double meaning, occasioned by the *wrong-placing* of the words, that I wish you to attend to.

Now, see how easily the sentence might, with the same words, have been made unequivocal, clear, and elegant: "My Reverend Brethren, being called, at a late period of life, to preside over this distinguished diocese, I have thought it incumbent on me not to delay, longer than circumstances rendered absolutely necessary, the opportunity of becoming personally acquainted with my clergy."

How easy it was to write thus! And yet this bishop did not know how to do it. I dare say that he corrected and re-corrected every sentence of this charge. And yet what *bungling* work it is, after all! And these are your *college* and *university* bred men! These are the men who are called *Doctors* on account of their literary acquirements, *doctus* being the Latin word for *learned*! Thus it is that the mass of mankind have been imposed upon by *big sounding names*, which, however, have seldom failed to insure, to those who have assumed them, power, ease, luxury, and splendor, at the expense of those who have been foolish or base enough to acquiesce, or to seem to acquiesce, in the fitness of the assumption.

Such acquiescence is not, however, so general now-a-days as it formerly was; and the chagrin which the "*Doctors*" feel at the change is not more evident than it is amusing. In the very charge which I have just quoted, the tutor of the heaven-born minister says, "A spirit is still manifest amongst us, producing an impatience of control, a *reluctance to acknowledge superiority*, and an eagerness to *call in question the expediency of established forms and customs*." What! is it, then, a *sin*; is it an *offence against God*, to be reluctant to "*acknowledge superiority*" in a bishop who cannot write so well as ourselves? Oh, no! We are not to be censured, because we doubt of the *expediency* of those establishments, those

colleges and universities, which cause immense revenues, arising from public property, to be expended on the education of men, who, after all, can produce, in the literary way, nothing better than writings such as those on which we have now been remarking.

The nature of the faults in these extracts may, perhaps, be made still clearer by calling your attention to the two kinds of sentences called loose and periodic. A loose sentence is one in which the sense is complete at the end of any phrase or clause in it, whereas a periodic sentence keeps the sense suspended till the end. The latter is generally preferable to the former. For instance: "We have learned to speak and write English correctly, in a few months, by means of this little book, in spite of many obstacles." This is a loose sentence; so loose that any member of it may be dropped without injuring the sense. Now let us put it in a periodic form, and you will see that you can come to a full-stop nowhere except at the end. "By means of this little book, we have, in a few months, in spite of many obstacles, learned to speak and write English correctly."

THE END.









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